パパ聞キンシ！

Listen to me, girls. I am your father!

2

松 智洋

PRESENTED BY Tomohiro Matsu

なかじまゆか

ILLUSTRATED BY Yuka Nakajima

スーパーダッシュ

瀬川 祐太 Segawa Yuuta

普通の大学一年生。特別取り柄もなく、友達を作るのも苦手な方。
両親を亡くしており、姉に育てられた。

小鳥遊 空 Takanashi Sora

中学二年生の美少女。しっかりもので妹思いの長女。
思春期まっただ中で、祐太との生活に一番悩みが深い。

小鳥遊 美羽 Takanashi Miu

アイドルばりの美貌を誇る10歳。女子力の高い小悪魔系。
姉妹の絆は強いが、よく空をからかっている。

小鳥遊 ひな Takanashi Hina

3歳の保育園児で、人なつっこく可愛い女の子。
祐太のことをおいたんと呼んで慕っている。

織田 莱香 Oda Raika

祐太と同じ大学の二年生。美貌と巨乳の持ち腐れと呼ばれる
変わり者。とんでもない無表情ながら、可愛いものが好き。

仁村 浩一 Nimura Kouichi

祐太と仲の良い同級生で、人当たりの良いイケメン。

佐古 俊太郎 Sako Shuntarou

祐太達の所属する『路上観察研究会』通称"ロ研"の会長。

前島 大機 Maeshima Daiki

空のクラスメートで、合唱部で一緒だった大柄な少年。
元気が取り柄で、分かりやすく空に好意を寄せている。

北原 栞 Kitahara Shiori

小鳥遊家の向かいに住む女子高生。思いこみが強い。

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D ま1-9
パパのいうことを聞きなさい！2
松 智洋
集英社スーパーダッシュ文庫

この変態（ロリコン）！

空ちゃんたちに何かしたら、あたしたちが黙ってないからね！

前島 大機
Maeshima Daiki

北原 栞
Kitahara Shiori

瀬川 祐太
Segawa Yuuta

小鳥遊 空
Takanashi Sora

小鳥遊 ひな
Takanashi Hina

小鳥遊 美羽
Takanashi Miu

「おかあ……さん」

空ちゃんが、初めてそう言ったのが聞こえた。

どれだけ我慢していたんだろう。

俺は、腕の中の細くて軽い身体を

しっかりと抱きしめる。

「空ちゃん……俺が、俺がぜったいに守ってやる！」

Papa no Iu Koto o Kikinasai!

Volume 2

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Even in a family, there will still be secrets.

This probably counts as a good thing. Probably.

It might be because we're living together that secrets must exist.

Even so…… If possible, I hope that it won't be something too shocking for me.

Prologue

I— Segawa Yuuta, who is nearing twenty— experienced three turning points in my life.

The first turning point was when my parents passed away.

You could say that my life full of trials and tribulations started just then.

From that time, I lived with the person who could count as my only relative, my sister, living a life of destitution.

…… No, that might be too much.

My sister, Yuri, who raised me, was a very reliable person. Though we had to live a rather frugal life, she never let me feel any obvious financial pressures.

And because of Nee-san's efforts, I could still have a personality that was said to be optimistic by my friends, even with my upbringing.

The second turning point in my life was probably when I chose to live alone after Nee-san married.

To me, who did not undergo too many hardships because of Nee-san's protection, that might have been the first time that I had to face the ferocious waves of society directly.

And I could only tide over all these difficulties with my newly acquainted friends and senpais.

The third turning point—

Was a significant incident that had the most impact on my life full of trials and tribulations.

On a certain day in summer, I became the father of three girls.

Three months after that—

"You can't open it!"

Early in the morning, the voice of a girl rang throughout the peaceful residential streets in a corner of Ikebukuro.

As most of the residents here seemed to have lived here since long ago, coupled with the fact that most of them were rather wealthy, it was unexpectedly peaceful here even though the residential district was near the famous Ikebukuro downtown, and the public security was fine as well.

Not for Sale or Rent

It is now dawn, and the neighbors could probably hear the piteous cry quite clearly.

The person who noticed me walking out of the room and giving an ultrasonic scream is the eldest daughter of the Takanashi family, Sora-chan. It's rather unbelievable that she has such an amazingly loud voice inside that petite body.

Though it was still at the crack of dawn, Sora-chan's brownish hair that reached her shoulders were already neatly combed, the ribbons that could be considered as Sora-chan's trademark were already tied on her silky hair.

Though the middle school girl that would be deemed cute in the eyes of eight or nine people out of ten isn't related to me by blood, she is a person that could be best described as my 'niece'.

And I am her guardian at the same time. However……

"Sora-chan…… What……?"

Even though the ringing in my ears did not fade yet, I still tried to inquire.

"Onii-chan! You can't open that door!"

"Eh……? Err, but…… Isn't it more like the door that can't be opened in the first place?"

I looked at the door before my eyes.

I had no intention of opening the door, it was just that the door came into my view when I walked near it, so I naturally took a closer look. Even so…… When we moved in from Hachiouji, the door was deemed the 'door that can't be opened', even though it was actually Nee-san's room. Sora-chan probably took the clothes from that room when she borrowed Nee-san's clothes as well.

And because of that, it made me curious to what the room contained……

"T- That's right! Because we lost the key!"

"That's why I asked if we should get a locksmith before this."

"I- It's okay! You don't need to go to such trouble! There isn't much that can be used in the room anyway!"

Sora-chan said while forcefully pulling on my arm, trying to drag me away from the room.

Hmm…… This is just too suspicious. With such a heated response, it would make people think that something was inside instead…… Oh?

"…… Hmm……"

"What is it? Why are you making that strange noise?"

Sora-chan raised her head, looking at me in displeasure, but I had already got used to her stern expressions.

Although Sora-chan is much cuter when she is smiling compared to now, she is still a bishoujo even when she frowned.

She tugged forcefully on my arm while being at an extremely short distance from me.

And naturally, my arm felt like it was tightly hugged in Sora-chan's arms, her small but growing breasts sticking close to me, while of course I couldn't tell that to Sora-chan. If I spoke out, I would definitely be scolded as a pervert.

With my stand as 'Papa', the happy but troubling feeling really made me have complicated feelings.

As a guardian, it would really give me a headache if Sora-chan becomes even prettier in the future…… I couldn't help but think that in my heart.

As I was thinking about all these matters in my mind, the 'door that can't be opened' slipped from my mind.

I walked to the kitchen from the living room and opened the fridge. After taking out the PET bottle of a beverage, I took a sip, enjoying the refreshing morning that I exchanged with the life of waking early that doesn't fit the life of a college student at all.

"Phew— That's nice."

"Ah! I bought that, and I was planning to drink it!"

But just the next instant, I heard Sora-chan's second scream of the day. Her voice was startling, as usual.

Sora-chan's gaze fell on the bottle in my hands.

Whoops, it seems that I haven't changed the habits from the days when I lived alone.

"Err…… Sorry. But I just had a sip……"

I extended my hand, planning to hand Sora-chan the open bottle, but she walked backwards with a greatly troubled expression on her face for some reason. Sora-chan's gaze shifted from the bottle to my face a few times. And then, her face turned completely red, like a kettle.

"H- How can I ever drink this! Onii-chan, you huge idiot!"

"Huge idiot……"

You really don't need to say that.

"Oji-san, you're really lacking delicacy."

The person who said that is the second daughter in the Takanashi family— Miu-chan.

With a bottle of mineral water in her hands, she sat on the sofa, watching a morning talk show.

Her blonde hair inherited from her mother was tied into pretty twin tails, presenting a dazzling luster as usual.

The idol-level bishoujo who, ten people out of ten would doubt we're related by blood, was actually my niece that wasn't related to me by blood in reality as well.

"Miu, are you still drinking that?"

"Oji-san, do you want to try it? I bought a whole box."

Though I couldn't comprehend why she specially bought plain water, according to Miu-chan, drinking a cup of mineral water each morning seems to be the secret behind her beautiful skin.

Well, since Miu-chan bought it with her own pocket money, I don't have anything to say.

"Oi-tan! Hina too, Hina too!"

A young girl sat by the dining table behind me, repeatedly shaking her chair self-importantly. The part of her hair tied into a ponytail swaying with her body looks unbearably cute.

"Hina, do you want milk? There's orange juice as well."

"Uuu~ Hmm~ …… Milk!"

Hina raised her hand, saying loudly.

I would ask Hina the same question every day, while she would ponder in the same manner every day, but the final answer would always be: "Milk!"

Though about five out of ten people would believe that she is my niece, people who knew her mother would definitely say 'She looks just like her mother.'

Takanashi Hina, the only daughter that my sister Yuri left, is the only niece I am related to by blood.

After the little princess in our family took the glass filled with milk, she hurriedly drank it all in big gulps. Just seeing her frantic expression would make a smile surface naturally on one's face.

The three-year-old was always so serious no matter what she did, she's so cute.

"Miu, stop watching the television and come here. We're having breakfast now."

"'Kay~"

Miu-chan switched off the television, and sat at the dining table along with her sister.

"Itadakimasu."

After I said that, the three sisters said at the same time: "Itadakimasu."

During breakfast, which we always tried to have together, we wouldn't forget to say 'Itadakimasu' and 'Gochisousama'.

It's a daily routine that we did every morning.

Apart from that, the job of preparing breakfast was done in turns.

By the way, it's my turn today.

"Really, you cooked it way too long."

Sora-chan said while taking a piece of bacon.

"Eh…… Really? I think it's tastier when it's crispier like this……"

"I think it's better when they're softer as well."

Miu-chan complained after her elder sister finished speaking.

"So hard~"

Right after that, even Hina said that. Hina who was trying to chew on her bacon fell into a bitter struggle.

"…… I'll take note next time."

At these times, I have no other alternative but to apologize.

"Ah, that's right, Onii-chan. Did you forget to take out the rubbish last week?"

"Eh……? I did."

Even if nobody reminded me about this, I remembered that today was the day they collected flammable rubbish. Though the weather was rather cool nowadays as it's late fall right now, letting rubbish like food waste and the like pile up at home is a foolish decision for anyone. Just last week, Sora-chan did not forget to order me directly: "Remember to take out the trash."

"I'm telling you that you're doing it wrong."

"Eh!? How so!?"

"You must take it out before eight in the morning, and you must tie up the garbage bag properly, and you must cover it with a net as well. The Onee-san who lives opposite to us complained about this to me after helping us do it. It's really embarrassing for me."

That was Sora-chan's explanation. That's quite embarrassing, indeed.

It seemed that even taking out the trash followed strict rules at a district near the center of the city.

"Please remember today. If you do it too badly, the neighbors would complain."

"…… I'll take care."

And this time, I have no other choice but to apologize as well.

"Oji-san, you seem to be apologizing quite often."

"Oi-tan, were you a bad boy?"

"Yeah, Onii-chan is so clumsy."

"Oi-tan is cwumsy~"

The cute three-year-old toddler said happily while clapping her hands.

Hina's smile made me feel relieved.

From the time when the plane Nee-san and Shingo-san were on went missing, less than half a year had passed. The lives of the four of us living together that started from that time gradually stabilized.

Ever since we moved out from the rented room from Hachiouji, we have lived together in this house for about a month now. As you can see, although I'm a guardian with little say in anything, seeing that Hina is able to smile naturally again made me smile in relief as well.

"I'm off~"

Miu-chan energetically said that and walked to the other side of the alley.

No matter how you looked at it, the bag of a primary schooler didn't match her mature demeanor.

"Sora-chan, be careful on the road as well."

"…… Hmph!"

As for Sora-chan, she gave a humph in displeasure, and left rather quickly.

Sigh…… It's all because of me making her angry early in the morning. I must remind myself to take care tomorrow.

"Nee-tan, bye bye~"

Hina said while waving her hands repeatedly, while Sora-chan turned around and waved at Hina with a gentle expression on her face.

Why are you especially stern towards me, Sora-chan? Is it because I'm too unreliable!?

However, I didn't have the time to reproach myself, as I had another task to complete. I must send Hina to the kindergarten.

"Well….. Let's go."

"'Kay!"

At the moment I held Hina's hand and was about to move—

"Hmm……?"

It was an inexplicable feeling.

Though it's physically unreasonable, however…… I indeed felt someone's gaze.

"Oi-tan, what's wrong?"

"Ah…… No, nothing. Okay, let's go."

It must be my imagination. After telling that to myself, we set out.

When I thought about it, my attitude of lacking awareness might have been the start of all those troubles.

Even so, it was already difficult for me to take care of my duties of being a college student and the father of the three sisters, so I didn't have any energy remaining to perceive this truth.

The girl looking outside through the curtains looked very troubled.

The house that was still full of laughter during early spring changed after a certain day.

The doors were tightly locked, and not even a shred of laughter could be heard.

After asking around, she found that some relatives of theirs had an accident.

Though she wasn't a neighbor that was too close with them, thinking that she couldn't see the happy family anymore, an indescribable sorrow welled up in her heart.

However, some time before this, laughter returned once more to the house.

よいではないか
よいではないかー!!
あ〜れ〜
ぐるぐるぐるぐる

It seems like the news of the accident might have been her own misunderstanding, and they probably just went for a long vacation.

When she thought about that, she finally stopped worrying.

However……

The person living together with the three sisters right now was neither the gentle father nor the cheery young mother.

It was a man, a young man that gave her a frivolous and unreliable feeling.

"Strange…… This is just too strange……"

The girl muttered to herself in the room that was dark because of the closed curtains.

Though she wasn't sure of the suspicious man's identity, she was certain that the three sisters must have been lied to.

The proof was the piteous cries that could be heard from there almost every morning.

"It happened two times today, two screams in a row…… There must be something wrong."

And it was a scream that spread throughout the whole town.

What kind of abusive treatment were the three sisters put through?

Abuse of children? No, it could be more terrible…… That's right, the teachers in school once taught me that 'When you see men, you must treat them all as wild wolves', it's that kind of horrible…… Dirty…… Thinking about that, the girl hurriedly flung out the delusions in her mind.

"Things might not be so, but……"

She might be the only person who noticed the dangers surrounding those girls.

Although she is only a high school student, even so—

I must find out about the truth, and protect the innocent beauties from the wolves' claws.

At that moment, the heart of the young girl who swore to herself in her heart was like the female lead in the TV drama that she watched yesterday, full of courage.

Chapter 1 - Yuuta in Reflection

I opened my eyes in surprise, and a white bunny came into my view.

”Err……”

I tried to use my still fuzzy mind, trying to understand the current situation.

I remember that I returned home after sending Hina to the kindergarten. After that, I quickly cleared away the cutlery from breakfast earlier, and prepared to go to classes….. And then I lay down on the sofa. I planned to snooze for a while on the sofa, and that was how I fell asleep, while I seemed to have grabbed Hina’s favorite bunny doll in my sleep as well.

”Oh no……! My class!”

By the time I understood the current situation, I found that I had skipped the whole first period as well.

”Whoa…… Not again……”

It’s useless even if I regret it now. No matter how hard I hug my head in repentance, time cannot be turned back.

Arriving at the campus located at Hachiouji would take me an hour no matter how smooth the traffic is.

It wouldn’t help even if I go out hurriedly, as it’s largely different from when I lived in the room that I rented.

”Ugh…… How many times has it been now……?”

Among the subjects that have a grand total of twelve classes each, if one fails to attend one third of the classes, it would be treated as a lack of attendance.

To put it in simpler terms, it means that the credits for the subject would be automatically lost if one skips them for four days.

This means, if I’m not mistaken, this class is the third time, meaning that I’m near the borderline right now.

As the college lets students of various faculties accumulate credits by choosing their own classes in a tetris-like manner, they must go for other classes or even repeat the same class next year if they don’t have enough credits for a certain subject.

Though I thought ‘I ruined it’ in my heart, I still had the mindset of ‘Oh well, there will probably be some other way’

Since it's just my first year, there are probably still a lot of chances to redeem myself. Probably.

And I have more important matters to take care of right now.

Starting a new, smooth life at the Takanashi residence after breaking free from the three tsubo room near the college…… Though it wasn't until this extent, it's all thanks to Nee-san leaving us this large house that was spacious even for the four of us, eliminating a lot of unnecessary troubles for Sora-chan and the others.

I have no other wishes right now. If I still want anything more, it would just be wishful thinking.

But to be honest, I find myself wishing for a little bit more of a guardian's dignity recently…...

In any case, my new life had a pretty good start…… Though I want to say that, there is still a truth that cannot let me take things so easily.

It was something that happened when we went to visit Nee-san and Nii-san's graves after experiencing a lot of trouble.

"Ten million!?"

My cracked voice echoed in the silent cemetery.

Ever since that unfortunate event occurred, after we underwent the overwhelmingly busy days, I finally found time to visit Nee-san and Nii-san's graves.

The accident happened in the middle of summer. Even so, summer had long passed, and it is already late into fall now.

Usually, only gray tombstones could be seen in the cemetery, but the piled up fallen leaves turned it into a place with a profound sense of autumn. Of course, there is a reason that I shouted out such materialistic words that doesn't match the solemn location that was full of fallen leaves.

"Yuuta-san, you're in front of a grave."

Hearing Oba-san's words, I hastily shut my mouth.

Even so, the person who made me cry out loud like that was none other than Oba-san.

"Errr…… As you were saying just now……"

I really hope that I've heard wrong. With such an expectation, I asked yet again.

However, words of hot pursuit came from Oba-san again.

”The amount of money required for raising a child from primary school till he or she graduates from college is ten million yen or so. Of course, this sum of money is only the school fees, there are still other expenses required in your daily life— For instance, meals, transportation, medication, pocket money, and of course, women spend a lot on their clothes. Do you understand?”

Oba-san listed out the possible expenditure that we might have to spend in the future in a rapid fire manner.

I could only admire her foresight…… As expected of Oba-san, having raised two children single-handedly, she is not even a little vague in these aspects.

Coupled with the fact that Oba-san seemed to be a rather experienced staff of an insurance company, she is very clear about the various aspects related to matters about money. This woman, who can count as my only relative, had promised to give sudden spot checks on our living conditions each month.

If she finds out any problems, I might even get separated from Sora-chan and the others immediately, being forced to live in different places. Just thinking about that made me nervous, but she even reminded me about important matters that people easily overlook, while the lesson today is another huge shock, I felt as though I was heavily punched in the stomach.

”…… In any case, you would need around that sum of money, and because there are three of them, you can roughly triple it. Apart from that, Yuuta-san, you need to pay your fees as well, so no matter how much you’ve saved up, it won’t be enough.”

When Oba-san stopped temporarily to rest, my mind was already about to explode from thinking about the sum of money that I might need. At the same time, I wished that Oba-san wouldn’t just pour cold water on us when we just started our new life. Even so, I am very clear about what Oba-san wishes to express by mentioning all this.

”To be frank, the inheritance that was given to you is a hefty sum of money. However, if you consider ten years after this…… No, considering the time until Hina graduates from college, about twenty years are still required. If you think about it that way, the money is definitely not enough.”

”…… Mnn, I understand.”

Though I didn’t plan to use the inheritance that Nee-san left us, reality is crueler than I expected.

It seems like raising a child until adulthood is indeed an arduous task.

As parents are willing to raise their children till adulthood, it is clear how profound their love is….. Nee-san who raised me until now is probably the same.

While the three sisters who are busy cleaning up the grave for Nee-san and Nii-san right now cannot be bathed in their love anymore. Hina couldn't even comprehend the fact that her parents were gone.

If so, I have only one choice.

"The reason that I'm telling you all this is because I believe that your resolution is strong enough."

After saying 'Do your best now', Oba-san continued to clean up the grave.

Just like that, at the same time that I started my new life at Ikebukuro, I put in more effort in my work as well, vowing to impose a strict regime on the management of my money and life.

The assets that are now under Sora-chan and the other's names are now under the care of the Takanashi family as their official guardians, while a small amount of the money is taken out for our daily expenses and school fees, and is kept by me. In this aspect, Oba-san and the relatives of the Takanashi family handled it for us. Nobuyashi-san, Shingo-san's brother, really seems to be a civil servant working in the National Tax Department. Because of the extremely strict document that he made for us and an account book so detailed that it's almost too much, there is a safeguard against the other relatives using up the money.

And all the help made me understand even better how difficult it is as an adult, as a parent.

The only thing that I bought especially recently was Sora-chan and Miu-chan's phones.

In the conditions that we are the only ones living together, it is something that is absolutely necessary, and thus the expenses were paid directly from Sora-chan and the other's accounts. Having a new cell phone seemed to have made them quite happy, and they always keep their phones by their sides. Though there are some who own cell phones in middle school, there aren't many children in primary school who have cell phones, so it's no wonder that Miu-chan is so happy.

Thanks to the cell phones, we were able to contact each other very easily, so it's a huge help to me.

Just like that, among the carefully thought out plans of the people surrounding us, we started our new life.

And right now—

I am now late for school because of oversleeping, and I might even lose my credits….. Furthermore, this isn't the first time that I did this.

If Oba-san finds out about these matters, it wouldn't be strange if I were viciously berated for six hours. Well, it's my own fault for this.

”Wait, it’s probably okay, I’ll probably be able to make it, barely.”

That was what I told myself.

It is now a few minutes to ten. If I set out right now, I am able to attend the third period…… Probably.

To be honest, I want to just sleep until the time to fetch Hina, but of course I can’t do that.

When I stood up and was about to walk out, I suddenly felt as though I forgot something.

”…… Ah, the trash!”

What am I doing! Sora-chan did remind me about it quite a few times.

But when I poked my head into the kitchen to have a look, the garbage bag for combustible trash had already been changed.

Sora-chan probably came back to change it, and she even got out before us too.

”That’s right, I have to take out the trash before sending Hina to the kindergarten……”

Sora-chan probably assumed that I took Hina out without taking out the trash, so she came back especially. I hope she isn’t late because of this. And Sora-chan was quite displeased when she went out too……

When I took a closer look, I saw what looked like a hastily written note stuck on the garbage can cover.

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I’ll take care of you when I’m back!
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Those were the tidy words written on the note.

Uh oh. While thinking about that, I still couldn’t wipe the smile off my face.

Though I had to face quite a lot of hardship, but for the sake of my cute nieces…… No, for my daughters, all of this is nothing.

”Ugh, uh oh! The time!?”

While I was smiling to myself, the time became even more rushed.

I dashed out of the house and got on the train heading west that went on for about an hour. After reaching the okay-looking Hachiouji station, I finally reached my school— Tama Literary College, Hachiouji division— after riding my bike for about half an hour.

By the way, the view that appeared before my eyes on my way here were scenery largely different with the station.

Small hills and worn down residences surrounded the area.

To the students who wish to study in peace, the surroundings are quite favorable. However, how many college students in this world enroll in colleges just to study whole-heartedly? I feel rather doubtful about that.

And I, who can't be said to be an exception, only have average results in Tama Literary College.

The students here would consider their futures more or less, but in the end they still want to undergo a happy college life, so the college could be said to be a rather peaceful place. Even so, even students with a carefree attitude wouldn't think that they would be exiled to the wilderness like this before they actually started school.

And of course, I am one of the students with a carefree attitude as well.

In any case, people wouldn't normally think that students in different academic years would study in different divisions of the school, would they?

The school building used as the examination hall at first, located at the center of the city, is actually a building with only a few laboratories, while us freshmen are actually banished to a place in the middle of nowhere like Hachiouji. This is just an undeniable scam.

Even so, after enrolling for about half a year, even in a rural area like this, everyone still found ways to have fun, such as working part time, joining clubs, dating and the like.

And the person who could be said as the model of all this, and is at the same time the man who enjoys college life the most among all the people that I know, is currently preparing lunch in front of me, who still didn't make it to my classes in the end.

"Segawa-chan, why don't you have a piece of pork chop?"

Wearing a cute apron, Nimura turned around and asked.

"Errr…… Fine."

As for me, I was lying down on the floor, watching an afternoon TV drama in a lazy pose just like a housewife who doesn't have anything to do after sending her husband and children out.

Some people might think that it's rather impolite to put on airs in another's house, but there is a reason for me doing this.

It's because up till one month ago, this apartment suite that has excellent conditions, which is only five minutes from the school on foot, was where I lived.

Let me explain this in order. After I decided to move to the Takanashi residence, of course I had to stop renting the room that I lived in before this.

Nimura said that time that he wanted to rent my room.

According to his explanation that I learnt of afterwards, Nimura seemed to have got into some trouble with women, causing him to be unable to continue living in his previous home…… Just like that, Nimura completed negotiations with the landlord, moving into the room without any deposits, and is getting along just fine with his landlord (a lady, of course) right now.

Right until now, the vigor that this man, Nimura Kouichi, has…… Or I should phrase it as his skill of dealing with other people, constantly surprises me.

And that's why to me, this is a place that I can relax at.

Furthermore, this place now comes with a tenant who has excellent cooking skills and loves cleanliness, so I can enjoy a good meal like I'm having right now when I come over here at lunch time.

"Okay, it's done. Hurry up and eat when it's still warm."

The menu today is pork chop rice which seems a bit too rich for lunch. The pork seemed to have been given free by a dame working at a butcher's nearby. The just fried pork chop was currently giving out a salivating fragrance.

"Wow! It's good!"

"It's made from Berkshire pig, it's really thanks to that oba-san just now. I think I'll give her some veggies next time as a present."

After saying that, Nimura squeezed out a few drops of lemon juice onto both of our pork chops, and also placed some chili sauce at the edge of our plates.

"That's right, Segawa-chan, did you skip your morning classes as well?"

He suddenly asked, straight to the point.

"…… Yeah."

After taking a bite out of the ideal pork chop that was crispy outside and tender inside, that was how I answered.

”So you went for a part time job yesterday night as well? Well aren’t you hardworking.”

”That’s because I don’t want to use the money that Nee-san left us if possible. Do you know this? Raising a toddler until graduation from college requires about ten million.”

Though I just spat out what I heard from Oba-san, Nimura who doesn’t know about that still gave a rather surprised response of *‘Eh? That much?’*

”Sora-chan’s grades are quite good, so of course she should enroll in a good college. Since Miu-chan is so cute, she might develop in the entertainment industry in the future…… Ah, but it seems like highly educated idols are more popular nowadays. And you’ll need to use some money for training as well. Ah, and of course I’ll respect Miu-chan’s wishes.”

”Oi~ Segawa-chan~”

”And I wish for Hina to get into a good school as well. Since Hina is so cute, enrolling in a co-ed school might attract some troublesome men. If it turns out like this, I…… I…… Guwagh! No! Hina must attend an all girls’ school! And that’s that!”

”I say, Segawa-chan!”

”…… Eh?”

When I came to my senses, I noticed Nimura looking at me as though he was looking at an alien species.

”I understand how you feel.”

”W- what……”

I understood what he was trying to say, but his expression is mystifyingly annoying.

”Segawa-chan, you’ve completely immersed yourself in the character of ‘Papa’ now, haven’t you?”

”Not really. As usual, I’m still annoying the heck out of Sora-chan.”

”Those are completely different matters, and anger is because of the presence of love, isn’t it?”

”Is that so……?”

I hope so.

Though the housework is done with a sharing system, Sora-chan and Miu-chan always end up handling them in the end.

I thought that I should at least do things that I can do, so that's why I decided to work more vigorously. However……

"Even so, though your nieces are important, if you miss any classes again, wouldn't it be too dangerous?"

"Uuu…… I know."

Nimura kept going at my sore points today.

But in truth, my attendance and credits are rather pressing right now, and coupled with the fact that I often doze off in class, I didn't really make any good notes. If this goes on, it'll be hard for me to pass the semester test.

"And also, you aren't showing up at the clubroom lately, are you? Sako-senpai even said that you're *'lacking the self awareness of the next president!'*."

"Wait! What's with the certainty that I'm going to be the next club president?"

God knows. After answering in confusion, he started to eat the sliced up cabbage in large mouthfuls.

To me, who entered the club for a bad purpose, it's really a trouble of being force fed a favor.

Besides, if I am appointed as the club president when I don't even know the purpose for the 'Road Observation Research Society', it would only bring trouble after trouble. For instance, when I'm in an interview, what should I answer when they ask me: *'Did you ever take part in any club activities?'*?

Even the process of my recruitment, my kidnap near the station after a welcome party, was a mystifying situation.

No, the true reason is actually more terrible, or you could actually say that it's extremely healthy……

"Uh oh! If we don't hurry, lunch break is going to end!"

Nimura hurriedly stuffed the remaining pork chop into his mouth, and finished his lunch in a flash.

"Eh? Do you have class right after lunch break?"

"Err….. I have to meet someone."

Nimura said in slight embarrassment.

From his response, he's probably going on a date with a girl.

I really don't know whether to say that he's energetic or unchanged……

"Segawa-chan, I'm counting on you to put the keys at the usual place."

"Mnn, okay."

After saying that, Nimura hurriedly walked out, leaving me to leisurely enjoy my pork chop rice in the room.

After finishing my lunch, I cleaned up the cutlery and left the room.

I hid the keys behind the apartment, below a potted plant that the landlord tends to.

Since we're friends who knew each other since the start of school, we're quite familiar in this aspect.

After that, I walked to the college which is five minutes' distance away.

Along the way, I bought a can of coffee at the canteen, and proceeded to enjoy my after meal drink in front of the school building.

With only a few people wandering around, the campus seems abnormally quiet. Since the weather had turned cold, everyone probably gathered at smoking areas indoors or at cafes.

To be honest, I feel like hiding in the school building as well, but I really can't get used to the environment filled with smoke.

And if I stay at a warm place, I might just doze off accidentally. And because of that, I decided to suppress the slight hint of coldness, sitting on the bench like this until my next class.

But what should I do when winter approaches……? I think it's better not to think about questions like this right now.

By the way, I usually sit here as long as it doesn't snow or rain anyway.

This bench is a place where I had precious memories, after all.

"Yuuta."

That's right, the first time that Raika-san and I sat side by side was just like this……

"Ehh! Raika-san!?"

From God knows when, a striking beauty is already sitting by my side. With her legs crossed and her back against the seatback, she looked at me unwaveringly with her bright eyes.

She is the Madonna of our club, Oda Raika-senpai, second year major in Humanities.

To the people studying in this college, this is a name that everyone knows.

As for the reason, it would be clear when one takes a look at her appearance.

She has the perfect appearance that would put the term ‘beauty’ to shame, an outstanding figure that would awe even professional models, and even large breasts. Coupled with her glossy, curly, waist-length black hair, this person could be said as both perfect and mysterious.

Saying that might have been too exaggerated, but in my eyes, Raika-san is just that dazzling.

”Yuuta, good morning.”

”G- Good morning, Raika-san.”

Nervousness and excitement caused my voice to crack.

My heart kept pounding, and not long after that, my whole face started to burn.

Even though the both of us have already known each other for over half a year, the love that welled up in my heart did not decrease even a bit.

”Fine these days?”

”Mnn, mnn! I’m fine!”

”I’m not asking about you.”

”Eh?”

”How is Hina-chan these days? Did Sora-chan and Miu-chan get a cold?”

Raika-san’s impatience could be clearly seen right now though she is usually cool as a cucumber and doesn’t have large changes in her expression.

I’m not sure if it’s just my imagination, but there seems to be a red flush on her cheeks as well.

Seeing her like this, any man would probably fall in love immediately.

But I’m very clear that her reaction is not because of me, but because of Hina and the others. Raika-san is rather unrestrained when it comes to cute things, while our Hina is the cutest girl in the world.

”Sora-chan and Miu-chan are as usual, while Hina is so healthy that she has too much energy. Ah, that’s right, we brought Hina to try on kimonos for her Shichi-Go-San, though it’s just rented. Do you want to have a look?”

”O- Of course!”

As soon as the photo of the dressed up Hina was shown on my phone, Raika-san came closer frantically as though she wanted to snatch my phone.

I felt the warmth of Raika-san’s body, and her hair gave of a soft fragrance as well.

”It’s great to be alive……!”

Being able stick close to Raika-san made me cry out from my soul.

”What did you say just now?”

”No- Nothing! Nothing at all!”

How great would it be if time just stopped immediately. An old-fashioned thought like that surfaced in my mind, however……

”Err….. I have other photos of Hina as well.”

”I want to see.”

”Well then—“

I’ll mail it to you later then— I changed my mind at the instant I was about to say that.

This might be a wonderful opportunity.

I should ask Raika-san out using this as an excuse.

For her Oi-tan’s happiness, Hina definitely wouldn’t mind even if I give out videos of her like this.

Say it! Speak!

During summer, didn’t I keep missing chances of speaking after I decided to ‘ask senpai out’?

Nee-san said this as well, my strong point is not giving up.

”Err…… Raika-san, if you’re free…… Do you want to….. Go……”

”Ah!”

Raika-san suddenly shouted out loud.

”Raika-san……?”

”I nearly forgot. Yuuta, come.”

Raika-san stood up from the bench, walking towards the back of the school building, waving at me to follow her.

Losing my chance as usual, I could only follow while sighing.

I’m not sure if it’s because of her long legs, Raika-san is unusually speedy when walking, so I could only walk faster to reach her.

The small courtyard located behind the school building is completely shrouded with a sense of autumn as well.

Though I’m trying to express this in a more poetic way, it’s just that the ground was full of fallen leaves, making it hard for people to walk.

Even so…… Is it just my imagination? I have this feeling that I’ve encountered this situation once before.

”Mnn, probably…… Here.”

Raika-san stopped at the center of the patch of grass, turned around and said to me.

”Raika-san, why are we at a place like…… AH!?”

Perhaps this is the legendary situation? Calling someone behind the building, a place that can’t be seen, I can only think of two motives.

And if the other person is of the opposite sex, then there is only one answer left.

”Yuuta, I have something to ask you.”

Indeed!

S- So…… Unknowingly, Raika-san had already……

At these times, I must express the bearing and tolerance as a man, responding to Raika-san’s wishes.

”Err…… What is it?”

”Mnn, walk three steps to your right.”

”…… Eh?”

Though the request was rather odd, I still did it. Erm…… Three steps to the right, is it?

”That’s right. Turn to your ten o’ clock direction right now.”

”Ten o’ clock……? Err…… Like this?”

Another mystifying direction.

Even so, I still turned about thirty degrees according to senpai’s instructions.

”Walk forward one step.”

”Oh……”

A step forward. Uuu~ Why am I having a sense of déjà vu……

”Mnn, good.”

With her poker face still in place, Raika-san gave me the thumbs up seemingly in satisfaction.

”Err…… This is……?”

At the moment I was about to inquire to Raika-san for her reason in queasiness……

”Aha!”

An odd, unnatural shout suddenly came into my ears, while the view before my eyes turned upside down as well.

”Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?”

At the instant, I couldn’t even understand the situation.

Raika-san seemed to be below me. My skull was rattling, while my legs were in pain. It seems like I fell into a trap cleverly hidden by fallen leaves, and am now hung upside down.

”Wait….. What’s with this!? Raika-san!?”

Just at that moment, a rather broad silhouette appeared between Raika-san and I, who was still flailing frantically.

At the same time, I understood why I had the strange sense of déjà vu as well.

”Kukuku…… Well aren’t you in a mess, Segawa-kun.”

The black framed glasses that almost sank into the fat face sparkled in front of me.

A piercing light entered my eyes.

Compared with the bright courtyard, this place was much darker, and there was a musty smell as well.

Plus, my hands and legs were tied up, and I was placed on a cold mortar floor, so that’s why my body felt even colder. This is a scene that I am familiar with. That’s right, about half a year before this, I encountered a situation similar to this.

”You’re finally awake, Segawa Yuuta-kun, first year Japanese major.”

The sentence was familiar to me as well. Even if you search through the whole college, there is only one person who would do a thing like this. The only fortunate thing that is different from half a year ago is that I am now used to dealing with him.

”What kind of joke is this? Sako-senpai. And isn’t it different from last time? I didn’t faint at all.”

I spoke to the silhouette in front of me in displeasure.

”Oi! Didn’t I tell you long before this? You should go along with the atmosphere more.”

The glaring light disappeared, while the lights in the room were turned on.

The plump silhouette of Sako-senpai finally appeared clearly before my eyes, though I can’t say that I’m looking forward to it.

”It’s really been awhile.”

Using his previous manner, Sako-senpai spoke in a prideful tone as though he was acting out a play.

The third year Sako-senpai is usually like this as well.

Raika-san and I, of course that includes Nimura, joined a club called the Road Observation Research Society, ‘Roary’ in short, while this person is the president of the club. By the way, it seems that he has another title, the *’Eternal third year student’*.

The eternal third year student, it is as the name suggests.

He was a third year when Raika-san enrolled as well, and this year, he is still a third year. I think that he'd probably been a third year a long time before this as well.

Just this fact would be enough to prove his oddity, but he could also order the vicious looking rugby club members around, and even has a network of contacts in the other clubs, very mysterious indeed.

"That's right, how is Miu-sama these days?"

…… And also, he's a lolicon to the letter.

He treats our Miu-chan as an *angel*, vowing to follow her orders absolutely…… Something like that.

I think that I, as her guardian, must protect Miu-chan, so that's why I tried to give him a warning some time before this, but Sako-senpai's response at the time was—

'What nonsense are you spouting! If I touch her, wouldn't Miu-sama who is no different from an angel be sullied!'

Just like that, senpai sternly raged at me instead, and the speech that he gave after that was even more shocking.

'Listen well, I indeed like young girls. They are the embodiment of purity, beautiful fairies who presents a pure, unsullied world to the common man. Their presence can cleanse the evil in the human heart, and have the power to guide the universe to peace! We are to be touched by the perfection of their existence! Love! Care! These are the most supreme emotions! And because of that, I have to state this specially, people who love young girls like us are their guardians and eternal servants! We are incorruptible knights who do not allow the angels to be sullied or harmed! Even if we yearn for them from afar, wishing in our dreams to use our arms to embrace them one day, we absolutely cannot touch the fairies! Like trees that are burnt by fire cannot be restored, young girls are so holy because of their irreversible purity! If we touch them as we like, wouldn't that stain the holiness of the angel! And just because we know our own filthiness, we definitely won't try to touch them! The people who do rude actions to young girls are demons! They are beasts who cannot even compare to us! People who abuse children should be cursed! Please don't put us and those people on the same level! We are willing to revive seven times after death just to guard the young girls, becoming the shield of the delicate girls, turning into a hero who guards them from the attack of the demons! In other words! Love Miu-sama!'

It was just too long…… Though senpai is usually good-natured, he was so agitated that his whole body sweated at the time.

My point is, this really is disgusting. But anyways, it seems that senpai would be satisfied with just a look.

To be frank, I'm not sure of Sako-senpai's relationship with Miu-chan.

”Sigh! How worrisome, did she have any unnecessary growth or growing more hair or something like that?”

”Senpai, you don’t need to worry about that at all. I should say, please be aware that I might call the police.”

”Oi! Isn’t it bad to return kindness with ingratitude?”

”If you want me to choose between senpai’s kindness and my cute nieces’ healthy growth, I will unhesitatingly choose the latter.”

”Uuu……”

Senpai seemed to accept my statement as well, because he stopped talking nonsense after moaning for awhile.

”Err…… Shouldn’t we get into the main topic now?”

At that moment, Nimura whose hands were holding a desk lamp said beside us.

”Nimura, did you gang up on me with them?”

”Not really, I can’t go against senpai after all.”

Nimura said in a carefree manner. He definitely did this thinking that it would be fun.

Even so, how should I say this…… This situation made me recall the situation when I first enrolled as well.

Thinking back, on the night of the welcome party, this was how I was kidnapped to the clubroom and got to know these people.

And thanks to them, I could undergo a somewhat fulfilling college life.

Even so, I’m still wishing that they wouldn’t design traps to make fun of me whenever they’re free.

”Well, what is it now?”

”Mnn, fetching you here like this is for a very important matter as well.”

Hanging me upside down on a cold day like this, being carried all the way here by the muscled rugby club members, having to endure the stench of their armpits along the way, if they told me that there wasn’t any particular reason for doing this, it will be strange if I don’t fly into a rage.

Just when I was planning to speak my mind, I thought that instead of continuing to interrupt by complaining, it's better if I leave the cold floor faster, so I refrained myself.

Sako-senpai coughed lightly as though he wanted to keep people waiting before speaking:

"I'll just make this clear. Segawa-kun. If you continue like this, you would have to repeat the grade."

"…… Eh?"

Though it is said that people would make odd noises when they're surprised, at the moment, I think my expression is probably quite comical as well. That showed how unacceptable the meaning behind Sako-senpai's words is to me.

"Err…… Repeating grades…… Meaning me?"

"Yes."

"W- Wait a minute! I do skip classes often, but isn't my attendance still in the passable area!?"

"Sigh! It's because of this that kids who enter for half a year are annoying."

Sako-senpai said while shrugging. His attitude is really annoying.

"In our college, there is something said to be the Hachiouji threshold."

"Hachiouji threshold……?"

According to Sako-senpai's explanation, it seems like including the mandatory subjects, if a student doesn't fulfill the required credits, he cannot enter the laboratory in his third year.

There are many students unclear about the situation who fool around, and can only watch their friends moving to the school building at the center of the city, while they are forced to stay at Hachiouji to be a second year once again.

"The credits that you obtained last semester were only eight. It's a number that almost includes only mandatory subjects, and you got only B at best, it's so disappointing!"

"Wait a minute!? Senpai, how do you know my grades!?"

Senpai held a paper with unknown contents on his hands, loudly commenting on my grades.

Though I struggled frantically, trying to snatch away the paper, since I was in a tied-up state, I almost couldn't move at all.

"Please don't look down on the intelligence network of us Roary."

”…… Isn’t it more like an undeniable violation of privacy?”

Senpai deliberately ignored my statement and continued:

”Even if you get full credits in your next semester, you’ll only get thirty credits at most. If you want to step into the lab, you must at least have eighty credits…… Do you understand what I’m trying to say now? Hmm?”

Sako-senpai who took advantage of my immobility said that while using a stick to jab my face.

At the same time my cheeks were ravaged, I started to worry about my own condition as well.

If this goes on, I would have no other choice but to stuff my schedule full of classes in my second year. If so, I must reduce the time of my part time jobs, and if I’m unable to get into the lab…… I must repeat my grade.

If so, I would have to pay another year of school fees.

Though earning money is important, repeating grades is even more terrible.

If Nee-san got to know about this, she would probably explode. A chill suddenly came on my back.

”S- Senpai! What should I do!?”

”Fuhahaha! It seems like you finally understood the seriousness of the situation. Very well, just leave it to me. If I just hack into the system of the college and change it slightly…… Guwagh!?”

Slap! A harisen slapped into Sako-senpai’s cheek.

For an object made from thick paper, the sound that it made was abnormally loud, while Sako-senpai’s body fell onto the ground after turning sideways.

”You can’t do bad things.”

The person who vanquished Sako-senpai was naturally Raika-san.

Raika-san held a harisen even larger than the one she used before, and it was giving off an eerie metallic lustre. She started to hit senpai along a cute ‘Bad!’ comment, but since her expression did not change at all, it made people feel a bit scary instead.

As for Sako-senpai who was scolded, he lied on the floor while convulsing repeatedly like a dying fish.

Raika-san handed the harisen to Nimura, and lowered her head to look at the person collapsed on the floor— which would be me, and spoke:

”Yuuta.”

”Y- Yes!”

”You skipped too many classes.”

”Uuu!”

Senpai immediately hit my sore point.

”And you didn’t come to the clubroom.”

”That’s because I was rather busy these days, that’s why……”

”Excuses.”

”You’re right……”

Raika-san stepped one step forward, and stood by my side.

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As I was lying down on the floor, I could see Raika-san's long legs clearly, and even the inner part of Raika-san's skirt. Though the view was just before my eyes, in this situation, I really wasn't in the mood to enjoy it. Even so, I couldn't treat it as though I didn't see it either.

So I could only cautiously speak to senpai.

"Err…… I see it……"

"Is that so."

"Isn't it better if you mind a bit more? You're a girl after all."

"Stop fussing."

She held the stick that Sako-senpai used just now, pressing it on my face while turning it.

The most troubling thing for me was that the stick was aimed at my temple.

"If this goes on, you really have to repeat your grade."

"Okay, okay…… I've confirmed the truth already, so I'll definitely go for classes seriously starting from tomorrow."

"And the club."

"O- Of course! I'll come to the clubroom as well!"

"It's the school festival soon."

"School festival? Are we having any activities?"

The stick was jabbed into my nostril.

"Ah! I'm wrong, I'm wrong! Wow~ I'm looking forward to the school festival so much!"

In the condition of a foreign object being poked into my nostril, I said while squeezing out a smile almost in abandonment.

"…… That's why I have to come home later for some time."

After dinner that day, I explained to Sora-chan and the others about my situation.

"Is it…… Because of us?"

”N- Not really! It’s unrelated to anyone!”

Seeing Sora-chan’s sad face, I hurriedly consoled her.

”It’s my own fault for skipping classes, and it clashed with my part time job and the school festival now, so you really don’t need to mind, Sora-chan.”

Sora-chan still seemed to blame herself, not saying a thing.

”Can’t you reduce the time of your part time job? We’re not short of money now anyways.”

Miu-chan said, trying to ease the awkward atmosphere.

”Didn’t I say this before? The sum of money is for the use of you girls in the future.”

”But……”

It seemed like Miu-chan still couldn’t accept it.

I understand that the two are worrying for me, but looking from my perspective, it’s rather troubling for me as well.

I had resolved to be the children’s ‘Papa’ long before this.

That’s why I actually wish for them not to worry and continue to rely on me.

Even so, I’m very clear that my presence can’t make people relax and just rely on me.

”Oi-tan won’t come back?”

Hina asked, almost in tears. She probably noticed the heavy atmosphere at the dining table as well.

”I’ll be back later, so Hina might have slept already, but I will still be back. And Oi-tan is going to send Hina out in the morning as well.”

”If you lie, Hina will be angwy.”

”Mnn, I promise.”

Seeing me nod in response, Hina smiled happily.

”Okay!”

Just at that moment, someone suddenly stood up from the chair and shouted.

”Leave it to me! Even if Onii-chan isn’t here, it’ll be okay!”

Sora-chan cried out in agitation.

”If only we sisters work together, we would be able to support ourselves even if Onii-chan isn’t here! Isn’t that right? Miu!”

”Eh~ Me too?”

”Do you need to ask? After all, cooking, washing the clothes, cleaning and buying stuff, fetching Hina and so on, there are a lot to do. Ah! That’s right, we have to make a table for this.”

”Hina will twy as well~”

”Look, even Hina is so motivated now.”

”Okay, okay…… But I suggest not to overwork.”

Miu-chan agreed somewhat unwillingly, and seemed to understand that it’s futile to object to her sister.

”That’s all. Onii-chan, just relax and go for your work!”

”Err…… Oh, ‘kay.”

It’s almost like it’s the same even if I am not here, so it’s actually rather sad. Even so, I couldn’t bear to pour cold water on Sora-chan when she’s finally so energetic…… This kind of feeling is quite complicated.

”Alright! Leave it to us!”

Sora-chan shouted while raising her slender hands high.

”Sigh~ Onee-chan wouldn’t heed anyone’s words whenever she’s in this mode.”

At a side, Miu-sighed while Hina looked rather happy.

I thanked the three sisters’ kind intentions from the bottom of my heart.

At the same time, I felt ashamed of myself because of letting them worry about me.

I motivated myself and smiled. Today, I prepared a secret weapon.

”That’s right, I bought some doughnuts from a rather famous shop at Shinjuku when I returned from the college. Let’s eat.”

After saying that, I took out a lot of doughnuts out from my bag.

”Wa! Hina loves to eat doughnuts!”

”Hoho, thanks, Oji-san. Then I’ll have the chocolate one.”

Hina and Miu-chan started to happily eat the doughnuts.

Only Sora-chan looked at the clock in slight worry.

”Uuu~ What to do……”

I understand. It is said that people easily get fat if they eat sweet things at night, after all.

”Sora-chan, if you’re worried about your weight, you don’t need to eat it now. You can wait till breakfast……”

At the instant when I spoke those words, I immediately realized my mistake, but it was too late.

With her face flushed, Sora-chan’s whole body trembled.

”I- I’m not fat at all! My weight is absolutely fine! O- Onii-chan, you idiot!”

Sora-chan’s shouts echoed through the whole night-time town.

I had to put in a lot of effort to apologize to Sora-chan after that. Girls are really so hard to please.

Even so, the true problem does not lie here.

Yuuta and the other haven’t noticed yet, but someone else is taking note of Sora-chan’s shouts.

”Third time now…… There must be something wrong.”

A sense of justice burned in the eyes of the female high schooler looking at the Takanashis behind her curtains.

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Chapter 2 - Sora-chan and the Choir Club

It was something that happened not long after I started to go for my lessons seriously to make up for my credits.

Returning home after my classes and part time job ended, I couldn't help but furrow my brows.

"Ngh……!? What kind of smell is this!?"

I subconsciously covered my nose as the house was filled with a strong stench.

Black smoke drifted faintly before my eyes. It was a disgusting odor similar to that of a burning plastic bag.

I started to feel somewhat dizzy. It seemed like people would feel dizzy if they take in the smell for a longer time……

"Is it possible…… !?"

An overwhelming sense of unease made me rush through the entrance without taking off my shoes, dashing towards the living room on the ground floor. The living room was filled with thick, black smoke.

"Sora-chan! Miu-chan! Hina!"

I loudly called out the names of the trio.

I once saw on television from some time before that the scariest thing about a fire isn't the fire, but the smoke.

If humans inhale thick smoke, they lose consciousness easily, and cannot stop the flames from engulfing them, or even suffocate because of the lack of oxygen before that. As the extremely disturbing knowledge flitted past my mind, I loudly called out for them in agitation.

"Ah, Oi-tan is back~"

However, not even a trace of tension could be heard from the reaction from the other side of the black smoke.

"Where's Oi-tan? Too much smoke, can't see~"

…… Hina?

And from her tone, it sounded like she was quite carefree as well.

"Onee-chan, Oji-san is back."

“I know! Ah! Geez! Miu, switch on the ventilation fan!”

“Instead of switching on that, won’t opening the windows directly be quicker?”

“Then hurry up and open them!”

Sora-chan was in a bitter battle with the microwave in the kitchen with her face flushed.

Thank goodness the three of them were safe.

Miu-chan opened the windows in accordance with Sora-chan’s instructions. Not long after that, the thick smoke obscuring our sight gradually dispersed, while the clouded air turned much more comfortable as well.

“O- Onii-chan, w- w- w- welcome home!”

Sora-chan spoke with an exceptionally bright smile, but that was obviously faked.

Although she tried to block the kitchen behind her, the black mess in the wok and remains of vegetables could still be seen behind her small figure.

As expected of an expert that could leave wounds on the hand holding the kitchen knife.

After her magnificent failure, the kitchen was as wretched as a bombed out battlefield.

“…… What did you do?”

“This- This is just a tiny failure!”

“Onee-chan just worked too hard…… By the way, the thick smoke just now was due to Onee-chan defrosting meat, but mixing up the controls of the microwave and the oven, roasting it along with the packaging as well.”

I see. No wonder it smelled like burning plastic.

“Miu! Didn’t I ask you to keep it a secret!”

“Ehh~ I don’t really care~ Onee-chan, didn’t you often say that we can’t tell lies?”

Sora-chan angrily glared at Miu-chan, who continued to fake innocence.

I already understood the situation more or less. It was just Sora-chan trying to make some sort of a complicated dinner, and failing, huh? Thinking that it wasn’t a fire made me heave a sigh of relief.

“I’ll remake it right away! Just wait a little longer!”

“Wait, if you remake it now, it’ll be late night before you finish.”

I stopped Sora-chan, who was gearing up to return to the battlefield.

“Uuu……”

“Um, no! I wasn’t meaning to scold you……”

Although Sora-chan tried her best to hold it in, she still looked like she was about to cry.

She was probably feeling regretful as she put in a lot of effort, but was rather unsuccessful.

“After all, you still haven’t got used to it yet, so it can’t be helped. Even Nee-san was unbearably terrible when she just started to cook. We even ate frozen food and bread for a whole consecutive week once before.”

“Yuri-san too……?”

“How is that possible!?”

Both of them looked shocked as they were unclear of Nee-san’s past.

That’s reasonable as well, since even I, myself, had almost forgotten about such a matter before seeing the kitchen turn out like this.

Without realizing it, Nee-san already became a professional cook…… That was one of the comforting changes.

“Hina likes Mama’s dishes~ Wants to eat it again~”

“Yeah, Mama’s dishes were really tasty.”

I stroked Hina’s head. Hina didn’t understand that she could not taste Nee-san’s cooking ever again. However, she seemed to know that her mother wouldn’t return in a short term, so she just didn’t mention it often.

Hina’s words seemed to have struck the cords of an unbearable emotion. Their expressions instantly clouded over.

However, perhaps because she acutely noticed the change, the one who spoke to change the atmosphere was Hina as well.

“But, but, Occhan’s crab balls are tasty too!”

“Crab balls……? Oh, are you talking about the crab balls fried rice at Suzuki-tei? That’s really lovely as well.”

Suzuki-tei was the default restaurant for the students of Tama Literary College.

When I lived at the apartment where Nimura is currently staying at, I often went there to eat as well.

As its name suggested, crab balls fried rice was a dish that had crab balls on fried rice.

The crab balls that had large pieces of crabmeat were rather liked by Hina.

However, I planned to keep the fact that the crab balls only contained crab-flavored fishcakes instead of crabmeat in my heart until Hina grew up a little bit more.

In any case, even three-year-old Hina was so considerate of us.

Thus, there wasn't any reason for me not to go along with her. Besides, if this continues, the kitchen might be completely destroyed.

"Okay, I've decided. Let's eat outside today!"

"Ah, agreed!"

Miu-chan chimed in immediately as well.

"Oji-san, I want to eat sushi."

"S- Sushi, huh……? If you're fine with sushi-go-round……"

If it's just today, then perhaps we can afford to be slightly more luxurious…...?

"Hina thinks that sushi is good as well, right? Sushi-go-round."

"Sushi-go-round?"

At Miu-chan's question, Hina looked rather puzzled.

"That's right, Hina didn't seem to have eaten sushi before."

Miu-chan started to explain to Hina about sushi-go-round.

Hina seemed to like the fairy tale-like description of 'fish on a plate passing by her eyes like a train', and her eyes thus lit up very quickly, and pranced around while shouting: "Sushi-go-round! Sushi-go-round!" at the same time.

"Okay, then that's that. Everyone, finish your preparations and gather here after this!"

"Okay~"

“Okay!”

The two younger ones immediately ran to the second floor at my order.

Leaving Sora-chan remaining in place.

“Hurry up, Sora-chan. Why don’t you get changed as well?”

“But the kitchen hasn’t been cleaned up yet……”

“It’ll be fine if we clean it up later. Let’s do it together after we return.”

“…… ‘Kay.”

Her failure at cooking seemed to have given Sora-chan quite a blow, as she walked to the second floor dejectedly.

Looking at her forlorn silhouette, I sighed.

“Sushi, huh……”

Although they were girls, just thinking of their appetites at the stage of growth and my shriveled wallet in my pocket made me feel sorrowful, but…… their smiles are irreplaceable.

After that, I experienced the second shock of the day due to the small number of dishes taken by the girls at the restaurant, but what surprised me the most was the fact that Miu-chan gave the suggestion because of her concern for my wallet…… They were doing it so that I could concentrate on making up for my credits.

The mornings in Hachiouji were rather cold due to the fact that the school campus was on a hill slope, and there weren’t any tall buildings that were able to block the mountain winds. In addition, it was the time of the day when the temperature was the lowest as well. Even though it was only October, the air was already filled with a biting frost.

Although saying that might make people feel confused, to the current me, it is a matter of life and death.

“Hanamura-senpai, it’s really cold……”

“Hold on just for a little while, Segawa! There are just five more left!”

“I- I’ll try my best.”

It was six in the morning. The captain of the Rugby Club, Hanamura-senpai, and I were moving crates containing large amounts of bread.

The Hanamura Confectionery operated by Hanamura-senpai's family took on jobs of moving pastry, bread and similar items for neighboring colleges, while I was there to help out. Simply said, it was a part-time job focusing on manual labor.

However, the job that started from five in the morning was far tougher than I first thought.

The coldness made my hands stiff, and more importantly, there were a lot of places to send to, so even tiny delays could become fatal problems, which was why it was an arduous task.

It was said that a quarterback of the current Rugby Club clamored after trying out this job on a snowing day that: "I don't want to do this ever again."

In comparison, the condition today is quite good.

After moving to various supermarkets and canteens of colleges on the truck driven by Hanamura-senpai, our last destination was my own college. After we finished moving the bread, we kept the empty crates on the truck and concluded the work for the day.

After that, Hanamura-senpai and I sat together on the bench before the automatic vendor to rest ourselves.

"Segawa, you helped out a lot today."

"Not really. Compared with that, is it really okay for you to pay me so much?"

"Don't worry! Hahaha!"

Senpai forcefully thumped my back while laughing heartily.

I heard that the original workers in charge of delivering the goods fell sick one after another due to flu, and thus the job that was originally carried out using three trucks had to be dealt with by the two of us.

Although it was rather tough, it allowed me to get an exceptionally handsome pay for the day.

Thinking of the life of the three sisters and I, being able to get this sum of temporary income was quite gratifying.

"Speaking of which, how are you and your nieces recently?"

Hanamura-senpai asked while handing me a lukewarm can of coffee.

By the way, Hanamura-senpai was holding a can of red bean soup. Due to his family background, he was a person who liked sweet stuff quite a lot.

“Sigh…… To be honest, I’m still not used to it.”

After all, I was dealing with girls in their adolescence.

Despite the fact that our house was bigger, and our privacy had a certain degree of protection, there were still various problems that had not been solved in aspects such as bathing, going to the restroom, washing the clothes and many more.

“Girls are so mystifying.”

“Yeah, girls at this age are indeed hard to understand. I have a younger sister about the same age as your niece as well, so I understand how you feel very well.”

“S- Sister huh……”

Hanamura-senpai’s sister…… Which means, she has the same DNA as this large man?

I really couldn’t imagine it, or to be exact, I dare not to imagine it.

“Don’t worry, that is how adolescence is!”

“Is that so?”

“My sister, for example, does nothing but read, and won’t go out at all. Even when I ask her to do muscle training with me, she just answers me with ‘So idiotic’, and totally ignores me. When I think about it, it’s almost half a year since we spoke with each other properly.”

“About this, I think senpai is slightly……”

“However, you can’t give up just because of that! After all, you’re a person who took the role of their parents!”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

However, a literature-type girl with a macho brother full of muscles…… It was just too uncoordinated.

In comparison, our family seems to be rather normal.

But speaking of which, what kind of interests do the three sisters have?

When I think about it, I never did get to ask them about their conditions at school.

As a guardian, shouldn't those things be understood as well?

They should be about to go to school right around now……

" That's right, what you lack is…… That's right! Physique! Why don't you start by training your body! Us Rugby Club will welcome you any time!"

"Um, thanks but no thanks……"

After escaping from senpai's side with some trouble as he was starting to describe the beauty of muscles, I headed towards the lecture hall of my first lesson while rubbing my sleepy eyes.

If I can return earlier tonight, I'll try asking them how they're doing at school. That was what I thought on the road.

That morning, Takanashi Sora's footsteps were rather heavy.

"Onee-chan, you're still feeling downcast?"

"I- I'm not feeling downcast at all."

Sora turned her face to a side in displeasure.

She was still rather mindful of the fact that she nearly caused a fire when she failed at cooking a dish before this.

In addition, the fact that there weren't any chances for her to redeem herself after her large failure was another reason for her depression as well.

Recently, Yuuta would finish his dinner outside as he often returned late because of his classes and part-time jobs, and thus, Sora was not able to wash away her shame of that day.

If so, breakfast is fine as well. The day before, Sora made that decision and did ample preparations.

However, Yuuta went out before daybreak that morning as he suddenly took on a job.

Waking early full of vigor, walking to the kitchen in high spirits, and then her disappointment when she saw the message…… Just thinking of that made Sora sigh.

"Just you wait, I definitely won't fail during dinner today."

Today, I'm going to make Yuuta happily say that it's tasty! That was Sora's aim.

"I'm thinking that it's fine even if you fail. And if so, we can eat outside again. Let's have spaghetti this time."

“Miu! Even though I’ve become so motivated!”

“Hina wants to eat at family restaurants occasionally as well, right~”

Miu deliberately pretended not to hear her sister’s complaints and asked her younger sister, whose hand was held by her.

“Family restaurant?

“It’s like the place where you once got toys from.”

“Hina knows! Hina once ate cheese hanburger!”

“Didn’t you! It was tasty, right? You want to go again, don’t you?”

“Yes!”

“You two……”

Not for Sale or Rent

The betrayal of her two younger sisters caused the veins on Sora's forehead to pulse repeatedly.

Even so, I definitely won't admit defeat so easily.

If so, the effort I put in when I secretly bought cookbooks to learn how to cook would all be wasted.

"Eating at family restaurants would be too much of a waste! I'll cook dinner, and that's that!"

And with that, Sora carried Hina and walked out with large steps.

Looking at Sora's silhouette, Miu sighed with her usual smile and followed them after that.

"Wait a minute! I'll help out as well."

After all, if I just ignore this, the kitchen might be charred once again…… Even though her thoughts were the truth, the most important thing was, Miu liked Sora's look of concentration while she tried her best quite a lot.

It happened on a certain morning in those days.

Although they lived at the center of a city like the Toshima Prefecture, the middle school, primary school and kindergarten, the places the three sisters usually go to, were all in walking distance. And the reason for that was because Takanashi Shingo, as their father, wished with all his heart for them to study at schools with a geographical advantage.

After Sora parted with Miu at the corner of a road, she sent Hina to her kindergarten.

As the primary school Miu studied at was at opposite directions with the kindergarten, if she followed them there, it would mean that Miu would have to take a long detour.

Because of that, when Yuuta was busy, Sora would be in charge of sending Hina to school.

After Sora changed Hina's sheets for her to be used during her afternoon nap and prepared a change of clothing for her, she left while Hina waved goodbye with a smile. Sora rushed to the school she studied at with a small jog so that she would not be late.

The private middle school that Sora studied at was one that had rather strict rules.

As it was a *shingakukou* [1], the school fees was comparatively higher, while students who were usually deemed delinquents were comparatively lesser as well.

By the way, it was a co-ed school.

At first, Sora's father hesitated if he should send his beloved eldest daughter to an all-girls school one hour from their house or the co-ed school fifteen minutes away, but after discussing it with Yuri, he decided to apply for that school in the end.

…… In reality, Sora herself thought that even if a one-way journey requires one hour, she would still rather go to the girls' school.

After entering the school grounds, Sora stealthily slipped into her classroom from the backdoor and walked towards her seat.

After putting down her things, Sora arranged the items required for the first period at the corner of her desk, and when she was about to take a breather—

"Um……"

Sora met the gaze of a boy.

He had short hair and a face that still had a trace of youth. With an expression similar to anger, he stared unblinkingly at Sora. The boy seemed to have been talking to a tall, bespectacled boy, but as soon as he saw Sora's silhouette, he immediately ended the conversation.

Not long after that, he headed towards Sora's seat straightaway.

"Yo, Takanashi."

"G- Good morning…… Maeshima-kun."

Sora greeted him timidly. Even during the process, she had her head lowered to avoid meeting his gaze.

Maeshima Daiki— Sora really didn't know how to deal with this classmate.

No, not only him.

Actually, Sora wasn't good at dealing with the thing called 'males' from the start.

"Takanashi, why aren't you showing up at the clubroom these days?"

"Because…… But……"

Nervousness caused Sora to be tongue-tied.

She even had the illusion that he was glaring at her as well.

"You didn't come yesterday, the day before, and even before that! Everyone was waiting for you!"

“That’s because I…… already left the club.”

“I know that you don’t have it easy since something like that happened, but you don’t need to leave the club just because of that, do you? And the Choir Club didn’t have enough members in the first place!”

He spoke in a voice so loud that the whole class could hear, while almost all of the responses of the other students were: “Here we go again.”

As long as one hears the conversation that would happen each morning these days, any of them would understand clearly that the boy called Maeshima Daiki had special emotions for Sora.

The only person who didn’t realize that would probably be Sora.

Speaking of which, Daiki himself seemed to think that nobody noticed.

“Oi, just come back. President and the others…… and even I’m waiting for you to come back! I think…… no, President said that Takanashi’s voice is very melodious, and it’s just too much of a pity if you give up like this!”

“Ah…… For people to say that, I feel very happy……”

Seeing Sora smile after being praised made Daiki even more agitated.

“Ah! That’s right! After the club activities end today, why don’t we all go for okonomiyaki! You know the shop near the bus station, right! After all, we’ll be hungry after the practice! Takanashi, do you dislike eating okonomiyaki?”

“…… I don’t really dislike it, but……”

The boy called Maeshima Daiki spoke in a loud voice no matter what it was. Besides that, he often ignored the others’ opinions as well, and talked on by himself. When he got agitated, it would cause his bad habit to be even more obvious.

And that personality of his was the reason Sora felt troubled as well, but…… unfortunately, he, himself, didn’t know about that.

“L- Let’s go there together! Okay?”

“This…… I……”

Sinking into confusion, Sora couldn’t speak at all, and it wasn’t sure if it was because of embarrassment, even her ears turned red.

“Can’t you stop that? Takanashi-san is feeling troubled!”

“Maeshima, you’re anno~ying.”

“S- Shut up! It’s none of your business! I’m asking Takanashi! Isn’t that right? Takanashi, you’ll go, right?”

Boos gradually arose from the surrounding classmates.

As it was on the news, and because of her bereavement leave, Sora was forced to take leave for quite a long time, so her classmates knew of her troubles more or less.

Sora was thankful in her heart for her classmates for knowing about it and not mentioning it deliberately as well.

However, the boy was unwilling to let go of her. This boy, who was originally in the same club as her, caused Sora to be unable to react.

“…… I’m…… Sorry.”

In the end, she forced out the words.

“W- Why!?”

Daiki continued to persist, but Sora did not do anything and continued to stay silent with her head lowered.

“Daiki, it’s about time for you to stop now.”

The bespectacled boy who spoke with Daiki before that said with his hand on Daiki’s shoulder.

“Shuuji…… But!”

“As Tani-kun just said, it’s high time for you to stop.”

Right after that, it was the girl sitting diagonally behind Sora who was reading a paperback book’s turn to speak.

“And you’re just too loud. I can’t read like this.”

“You…… Hanamura! And you’re actually looking as though it’s none of your business! Aren’t you a member of the Choir Club as well! Why don’t you help out a bit!”

After Daiki's roar, the girl who was called Hanamura showed a rather surprised reaction.

"I don't recall joining the Choir Club."

"Eh?"

"Daiki, it's true. Hanamura-san just helped out under President's request, since nobody in our club knows how to play the piano."

"Um…… Shuuji, seriously?"

In great surprise, Daiki looked at his good friend Tani Shuuji and Hanamura Youko's expressions in turn.

"You really don't listen when other people talk. It's because of this that Takanashi-san is afraid of you."

"T- That's not it! I'm not afraid……"

"I- Is that so! Takanashi! Y- You're afraid of me…… Is that true!?"

Before Sora denied, Daiki asked frantically. His expression looked rather nervous.

Finding out that the girl he likes fears him, having such a reaction might have been natural.

And the girl called Hanamura Youko probably understood that as well, which was why she deliberately said that.

As for Tani Shuuji, he just looked at his good friend who sank into deep confusion, and Youko, who continued to read her paperback book nonchalantly in turn, while the panicked Sora's head continued to sink lower and lower.

Just at that moment—

"That's enough!"

It was a lariat.

A neckbreaker drop followed closely after that.

"Good morning! Takanashi-san, it's been a while~"

After the girl who suddenly rushed into the classroom dealt Maeshima Daiki with a flurry of vicious attacks, she greeted Sora with a bright smile.

"Buchou……"

“You don’t need to feel so awkward, calling me ‘Onee-sama’ like before would be fine.”

“Nobody addresses you like that, Okae-senpai. No matter in the present or the past.”

“Oh? Is that so?”

After the tsukkomi from Shuuji, the Choir Club president, Okae Kiyomi, laughed with faked innocence: “Ohohoho”.

“B- Buchou…… What’s wrong with you……”

Lying down on the groud, Daiki said while extending a trembling hand.

“Oh! I forgot. Take that!”

“Ngh!?”

After finishing off her kouhai with a chop, Kiyomi grabbed his leg and started to drag him away.

“Tani, you come too!”

“Got it……”

After Kiyomi gave the order, Shuuji helplessly followed.

“We’re leaving first, Takanashi-san. See you next time~”

Before leaving the classroom, Kiyomi elegantly bade farewell with Sora and dragged Daiki away while he bumped into things here and there.

“Sigh……”

Seeing her hurricane-like senpai leave the classroom, Sora unconsciously sighed.

“It seems like it isn’t easy to be you.”

“Hanamura-san…… Sorry.”

“Why did you apologize?”

“After all, it’s all because I left the Choir Club by myself……”

“I’m from the Literature Club, not the Choir Club, so it does not concern me.”

“T- That’s true.”

Youko, who would usually ignored everything, was unusually engaged in the conversation actively, but a few sentences after that, the two of them ended the conversation yet again.

Not long after that, other girls gathered by Sora's side, saying things like "It's best if you talk things out with a teacher", "Maeshima is really so thick", and started to chatter on.

Their concern for her made Sora feel grateful, but to be frank, Sora actually wanted to talk more with that cold classmate.

Not only was it because she was in the Choir Club with her, Sora could faintly feel a hint of friendliness from the girl called Hanamura Youko as well. Sora also wanted to find out about the contents of the paperback novels and mangas that would always be wrapped in their jackets.

While being surrounded by other female students, Sora still placed her thoughts on Youko, who was silently reading her paperback novel, for quite some time.

"What were you doing!? Idiot!"

An angry roar of the Choir Club president, Okae Kiyomi, rang in the stairwell leading to the rooftop.

And before her, was Maeshima Daiki, who was forced to sit on the floor in a seiza posture.

"No, I just wanted to get Takanashi to come back……"

"I was saying, since you wish for her to return, you should use your brain and think!"

With short hair and a vicious gaze, Daiki had a formidable presence even when he was sitting on the floor in a seiza posture, but Kiyomi was completely unconcerned and continued to lash out with chops on Daiki's head.

"Oh please! Takanashi-san is completely different with over-energetic and totally uncute guys like you!"

With a disgusted expression, Kiyomi finished speaking while looking at Daiki, and then narrowed her eyes in intoxication:

"Cute, slender, quiet…… Waking up in twitters in the morning, drinking herbal tea while reading poem collections in the afternoon, sleeping in a bed with a veil at night…… She's a person that gives off such a feel! Unlike you…… Just eating rice with natto and miso soup in the morning, sneakily finishing off your afternoon bento in class, and eating an extra-large beef bowl after club activities has ended, isn't that right!"

"Seems like he's always eating."

“Things like okonomiyaki don’t even deserve a mention! If you want to ask her out for lunch, pick a more suitable place!”

“Ngh……”

Daiki was visibly distressed. He originally thought that okonomiyaki was a good idea……

“Cool down, Buchou. That’ll probably be enough. After all, when Takanashi-san left, the one who was the most upset was this guy.”

“T- That’s not it! I just think that Takanashi is very talented, so it’s a big pity if she leaves, so that’s why……”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“It’s true!”

Daiki’s declaration was completely ignored.

“Anyway, we have to get Takanashi-san back to the Choir Club no matter what. To achieve our goal, we must prepare a more meticulous plan! After all, she’s a quiet girl like a veiled princess, so being forceful is useless. What that girl needs is……”

Kiyomi hugged her arms and sank into deep thought.

“T- That’s why, let me convince……”

“You shut up!”

“Ouch, ouch, ouch! Yield, yield!”

Kiyomi used her steel claws to grab Daiki’s face, and a startling noise rang from the skull. As a loyal fan of wrestling techniques, and the Choir Club president- Okae Kiyomi’s impulsive personality, haughty attitude and overwhelming strength caused people to stay far away from her.

It was probably one of the reasons the Choir Club couldn’t get new members. As the only person with common sense there, although Shuuji thought so in his heart, he was rational enough to keep that thought in his heart.

Just like that, the members of the Choir Club started to draft a plan to get Sora to return to the Choir Club.

As I was involved in labor work early in the morning, my sleepiness reached its peak after finishing my classes in the evening.

“I can’t stand it anymore…… So sleepy…… I think I’m going back.”

Sora-chan said that she’s cooking tonight.

As she was regretful because of her previous failure, she’ll probably be full of vigor today.

Although I think that it’s already great fortune that the girls weren’t hurt, Sora-chan herself seems to think that it’s a great shame.

I personally thought that wanting a middle schooler who never cooked before this to have skills equivalent to that of a housewife is completely inconsiderate, so Sora-chan didn’t have to be so anxious at all.

Anyways, it counts as being for Sora-chan’s sake as well, so I’ll just go back earlier today then. Just when I had the thought and was passing by the sakura tree path that had only branches left—

I saw a lady collapsed on the road, or perhaps I should say, I unfortunately saw her.

“Uuu~ Uuu~”

The person giving out rigid moans was of course, the striking beauty that I knew.

“What are you doing…… Raika-san.”

I couldn’t help but say.

No, wait, listen to my explaination.

Even when the opposing party is the woman I like, anyone would feel like saying something when she’s lying in the center of the road, making moaning noises that sounded obviously bogus, isn’t that right?

That moment, the other students preparing to return walked by while maintaining a distance from Raika-san and I with troubled or amused expressions.

You people, shouldn’t there be someone to help out a bit when there’s a beauty you can’t even see on the television moaning by the roadside? Although I had such thoughts, Raika-san’s actions were already known to everyone in the school.

I stood blankly for a while.

“Uuu~ Uuu~”

While saying her monotonous lines, Raika-san secretly turned around to observe my reaction.

That was probably the signal to urge me to go over to talk.

To be frank, according to previous experiences, there was only a bad premonition in my heart, but I couldn't just pretend I didn't see anything and leave.

"…… A- Are you okay!?"

I finally decided to feign worry and ran towards Raika-san.

I'm not just praising myself, I really thought that my acting was rather realistic.

"Uuu~ Uuu~"

In comparison, Raika-san's acting was seriously……

As soon as one hears her speaking, it would make people feel weak all over.

"Um…… That's right, hold on! Raika-san!"

My eyes widened the instant I helped Raika-san up from the ground.

That was because the chest of her shirt was wide open before my eyes.

The radiant hills formed from firm fruits was situated at a position that I could almost feel the body temperature from.

"Ah, um……"

"Uuu~ Uuu~ I'm having an attack from my old illness."

I didn't know if it was intentional or not, Raika-san squirmed her body as though she was emphasizing her breasts.

Although senpai wore a poker face as usual, her eyes were unblinkingly glaring at me.

But even when I understood that, and even though I knew that she was staring at me, I still couldn't stop.

My gaze was drawn by the huge breasts…… No, as a person, and as a male, it was correct.

Helping a beauty, and getting a reward…… I feel not an ounce of regret in the warmth in my arms!

"Now! Grab him!"

Just when I was unsure of where the sound came from, a crowd of men wearing judo uniforms appeared from a dark location and subdued me in an instant. After that, they raised me together and carried me away directly.

Whatever, I already knew that it would turn out like this. Don't be suspicious, I didn't say that because I was a sore loser.

The fact is, I admired Raika-san's breasts at an extremely short distance, so I definitely earned something from it.

But no matter how I tried to convince myself, I still couldn't get used to the chilly feeling of the floorboards.

"…… Okay, what is it today?"

As I was brought to the Roary clubroom as expected, I deliberately asked without concealing my displeasure.

"You don't seem to be in a good mood, Segawa-kun."

"Isn't that obvious? This happened for a few times already. Can't you ask for me with a normal way?"

"Those are two different matters. Searching for surprise and discovery in ordinariness is us Roary's ideal."

"That's the first time I heard of such an ideal."

Although I still wasn't clear what sort of club Roary is up till now.

"Nimura, you were captured as well?"

I asked Nimura at my side, who was in an even worse condition than I was in (simply said, he was tied up in a few circles and was hung upside down).

"So sorry~ I never thought that I would be fooled by a girl I knew only yesterday at the party. That party itself wasn't a trick, was it? I felt that there were a larger number of beauties there that day."

"Do you need to ask?"

How much effort did senpai put in this thing…...

"The reason we brought you here today is for an important matter."

Completely ignoring our current state, Sako-senpai started to explain by himself.

It's fine for me, but shouldn't you at least let Nimura down?

Perhaps because our minds thought alike, Raika-san ordered the helpers from the Judo Club to let Nimura down and loosen our bonds. In the meantime, Sako-senpai continued without waiting for us to adjust to a better pose.

“As you all know, the school festival of Tama Literary College is coming up soon.”

When I thought about it, that was indeed so, though I had long forgotten about it.

But in any case, that should be an event unrelated to Roary.

“Actually, us Roary applied for the event as well.”

“Eh……”

“And also, we haven’t decided on anything yet.”

“EHH!?”

“By the way, there’s only two weeks left until the school festival.”

“W- What do you mean by that!?”

I couldn’t help but cry out.

“And also, why didn’t you say this before!?”

“Regarding this, there’s quite a lot of complicated reasons……”

“Kaichou forgot.”

Raika-san directly revealed the inside story.

“Sako-senpai~~!”

“Hehe ☆”

“It’s useless even if you act cute! I should say that it’s really disgusting!”

“You’re really rude.”

What the heck? What can we cook up in two weeks?

And from the looks, he probably never thought of anything, did he?

“Why don’t we just cancel the application directly?”

“Fool! If we do that, we will be unable to join the school festival for two years as punishment! Don’t you know of the iron discipline passed down by the federation of societies!”

Of course I don’t know.

In any case, it seems like the rules for clubs in this aspect were unexpectedly strict.

“Then what do we do now?”

“Yes, I’m planning to discuss the event activity right now.”

As I thought.

“By the way, if we want to use classrooms or school facilities, we’ll have to apply before five today.”

“Then doesn’t that mean there’s only an hour left———!”

Before I realized, I had already picked up the harisen and mercilessly hit senpai’s face with it.

Although Raika-san gave me the thumbs up at my side…… It seems like I won’t be able to go back today.

Just when Yuuta was hitting Sako-senpai with the harisen, Sora was hugging a plastic bag full of ingredients, and reached home after some trouble.

“I’m back.”

“Back~”

Returning along with Sora, Hina’s hands held a bag containing snacks as well.

“Welcome home, Onee-chan…… Um, why is there so much?”

“Fufu~ Didn’t I say that I’m making dinner tonight?”

Sora headed directly towards the kitchen right after that.

“Shouldn’t you at least change your uniform?”

“It’s fine, and Onii-chan said that he would return earlier today as well.”

Sora immediately wore the apron on her uniform and started to prepare for dinner.

Sora's exceptionally good mood caused Miu to look at her sister's silhouette for quite some time.

"Hina, don't trouble Onee-chan. Let's play video games."

"Ehh~ Hina wants to help too~"

"No~ We're letting Onee-chan do everything today."

Although Hina puffed out her cheeks in dissatisfaction, she happily started to play after Miu switched on the game.

Miu knew that her sister kept thinking of today's menu since the previous day.

Not easy to fail, and can be completed with minimal use of the kitchen knife and fire…… Under Miu's suggestion, Sora referred to the recipe in her hands, mustering her vigor to let Yuuta see her best side.

The conclusion that she got was a rather basic, Japanese style choice.

Thinking of that, Miu couldn't help but smile wryly as she played with Hina.

Just like that, about an hour passed since Sora started to make dinner—

Trrrrrriiiiiinnnnnnng!

The telephone at the corner of the living room rang.

"I'll get it!"

When she saw that Miu was planning to pick up the phone, Sora immediately stopped her.

Usually, there weren't many people who would call them.

Mostly, they were relatives, promoters, or Yuuta.

Recently, nothing happened that would cause their relatives to call, while promoters won't call at dinnertime as well.

Thus, the only choice left would be Yuuta.

Sora picked up the phone after finishing her deductions with the elimination method.

"Hello? This is the Takanashi residence!"

'Hello? …… Is this Sora-chan speaking?'

As expected, it was Yuuta calling.

“Is it Onii-chan? Listen, the curry for dinner is going to be done soo……”

’Sorry!’

“Eh……”

’To be honest, I have to discuss things about the school festival with someone all of a sudden, so I might not be able to make it back today.’

“Is…… that so……”

’I’m really sorry. The three of you can have dinner first. Calling for delivery is fine as well.’

“…… Nn, okay. Onii-chan, you’ll have to do your best as well, all’s fine at home!”

After forcing herself to speak brightly, she put down the receiver.

The sound of the phone hanging up seemed to have a strange sense of loneliness.

“Was that Oji-san?”

Miu turned around to ask while she played her video game.

“Nn……”

In Miu’s eyes, her sister’s expression was rather dark, completely different from before.

“…… Is it possible…… Oji-san can’t make it back today?”

“Nn.”

After clicking her tongue, Miu showed an awkward expression.

“Oi-tan isn’t coming back?”

“I think he’s busy with stuff at his college.”

“Really……”

Hina turned around to say to her bunny doll: “Adults are so busy~”, a vague conclusion.

On the other hand, Sora walked back to the kitchen and stared at the large pot of curry that was almost done……

“Idiot Onii-chan.”

Sora covered the pot with the lid after saying so in a soft voice.

After hanging up my cellphone with a feeling that made my gut ache, I raised my head to look at the moon and apologize to Sora-chan.

“Sigh…… Sorry.”

I sighed in the campus, where it had already turned completely dark.

Sora-chan sounded rather bright in the phone.

I was originally worried that Sora-chan would be angry, or what I should do if she was visibly despaired, so that made me sigh in relief as well.

“Yuuta, is it okay?”

Raika-san turned around to ask.

“Nn, it seems like there isn’t a problem at all.”

I stuffed my phone into my pocket and turned around to say to that her.

“Is that so……” Raika-san said softly and started to walk again.

“Segawa-kun, if you don’t hurry, we’re leaving you behind~”

Walking in front, Sako-senpai called me with a leisurely tone.

We were planning to discuss the problem about the school festival at Nimura’s place.

In the end, we still applied for the usage of a classroom at the last moment, meaning that we lost the choice of being able to do nothing, that was the scary thing.

There were only two weeks left until the school festival.

And I felt that I had immediately sank into a scary situation.

“Can…… I still go back……?”

Saying things like this would bring misfortune, that were the rules of the world.

My initial unease was fulfilled. When I walked out from Nimura's apartment, it was already the next morning.

"The sun…… is so yellow……"

I wasn't sure if it was just an illusion or because of my lethargy, I spoke weakly with my head raised, looking at the eerie color of the morning sun.

"Hah~ How exhilarating!"

And the person who spoke such a thing at a side leisurely was the president of Roary, and at the same time, was known as the man of the source of all evil.

Seeing the self-proclaimed third year bespectacled fatty standing before my eyes, my indescribable feeling after burning the midnight oil increased in viscosity, making me feel as though I was walking in mud.

The reason my description of Sako-senpai was so sharp and malicious was because the time for discussion that night was only the starting hour, while the rest of the time was wasted on video games, supper and other actions of accompanying Sako-senpai's obstinacy.

By the way, Raika-san had long since left when the discussion started to go off topic.

Even if we were friends in the same club, wanting Raika-san to stay in a cramped room for the night with three men would make people feel bad no matter what, so it wasn't really a problem, but the harm that Nimura and I got from losing our sole source of nutrition was quite considerable.

"Nimura, are you still okay?"

"No…… I can't go on anymore……"

Nimura, who loved cleanliness, would probably have to clean up the apartment that got messed up due to Sako-senpai fooling around in it.

While I had to use up more than an hour to return home.

The only fortunate thing was that it was Saturday that day.

"I'm going home first, remember to think of something by Monday!"

Looking exceptionally energetic, Sako-senpai left after leaving behind such an irresponsible statement.

"Goodbye, I have to go home as well……"

“Okay……”

I weakly raised my hand to bid farewell to Nimura.

I lethargically rode a bike and headed towards the station along the familiar streets.

I went on the train with people that looked like salarymen on duty, shopping housewives, and families preparing to enjoy the break.

The instant I sat on the seat, sleepiness immediately assaulted me.

Luckily, my destination, Shinjuku Station, was the last stop, so I could happily sleep on the train.

After reaching Shinjuku, I went to Ikebukuro, where my house was at, by bus.

When I arrived, the number of pedestrians naturally increased.

I still haven’t got used to the changes in scenery when I set out from Hachiouji until I landed at the city center.

The difference was especially great on the way back home from Ikebukuro Station.

I finally relaxed after entering the residential area after some time, and an impulse of wanting to rush over when I saw the roof of my house at the end of the slope arose as well.

There’s probably no other person more unsuited to stay in a large city than me.

“I’m finally home……”

Reaching my own house after a long journey gave me an indescribable sense of accomplishment.

Just when I took out the keys from my bag and was about to open the door to enter the house……

“Hmm……?”

It was the gaze I felt last time.

I turned around and noticed a female wearing a sailor uniform [2] at the entrance of the house opposite to us.

From her appearance, that person seemed to be slightly older than Sora-chan, probably a high schooler.

She had hair that was long, black and straight, and wore a knee-length skirt that was dark blue in color. Of course, there wasn’t any trace of make up or earrings on her face, and only the large

ribbon tied on the side of her head had any special features, a rather good attire rarely seen nowadays.

“Ah…… Hello.”

Realizing that she was unblinkingly staring at me for quite some time, I hurriedly greeted her.

Lack of sleep and lethargy seemed to have caused my brain to be unable to function properly.

However, after the high school girl with a traditional air glared at me for a moment, she turned around and left.

“What’s…… wrong with her……?”

Eh? Did I do anything to anger her?

I only moved here recently, and almost never had any interactions with the neighbors……

“…… Whatever, who cares.”

Although it was somewhat mystifying, I didn’t think much about it and opened the door.

“I’m back.”

Thinking that the girls might still be sleeping, I lowered my voice and closed the door as quietly as I could. As I expected, there was only silence in the house.

Actually, I originally anticipated meeting any one of them.

“After all, it’s a holiday……”

Just when I reached the living room while muttering to myself……

“Welcome home.”

“Uwagh!?”

I turned around in shock and saw Sora-chan poking her head from behind the sofa to look at me.

“I- I’m back…… Is it possible…… That you slept there?”

“I- I just woke up early, and was watching the television over here!”

Although she said that, her messy hair proved that she just woke up.

Did she wait there all along for me to return……

“Curry.”

“Eh?”

“There’s still some curry left.”

Sora-chan turned around and spoke in a soft voice.

When I had a closer look, there was a large round pot on top of the gas stove.

That was probably the dinner Sora-chan made last night.

“Ah! Oji-san is back.”

“It’s Oi-tan!”

The other two gradually poked their heads out from behind the sofa as well.

I hugged Hina, who rushed over to me like a cannonball.

“Um…… Everyone, I’m back.”

“Welcome back~”

“Welcome back!”

I’m really happy.

“Hug~ Oi-tan, hug~”

Being surrounded by them with large smiles, my eyes couldn’t help but tear up.

Having people waiting for me to go home made me experience once again how happy such a thing was. I hugged Hina, allowing myself to be in her fragrance and lowered my head to Sora-chan and Miu-chan.

“Sora-chan, thank you.”

“W- Why are you saying that all of a sudden?”

“You made dinner yesterday and waited for me, didn’t you? This morning as well.”

“I said that I just coincidentally woke up early!”

Seeing Sora-chan’s flushed face, Miu-chan showed a mischievous smile.

“When she found out that Oji-san won’t be coming back, Onee-chan’s disappointed look was really…… Do you want me to replay it? Oji-san will definitely be surprised.”

“Hina too, Hina too~ Replay! Replay!”

“Kyaaa!! Miu! Stop that! Don’t fool around anymore!! Sheesh, even Hina is joining in the commotion!”

“Ahahahaha! Oi-tan, what’s replay?”

It’s so lively even in the morning.

I watched the three sisters’ interactions for some time, even forgetting about my sleepiness.

“Okay, okay. Oji-san, let’s have breakfast. Although there’s only curry.”

“If you’re unhappy with that, you don’t need to eat it.”

“I’ll eat, I’ll eat, because it was Onee-chan’s cooking that you so rarely succeeded in making. Such a precious chance is really rare, so I’m eating it even if it’s breakfast.”

“M- Miu!”

“Hina likes curry~”

“If so, let’s eat together.”

As Miu-chan said, the curry Sora-chan made was really delicious, just that the serving filled the whole round pot, so I really didn’t know how to deal with it. It seemed like we would be having curry for quite some time.

Outside the house where the family reunion was happening, there was a silhouette peeping at the Takanashi family.

“It’s undeniable now, when that man returns, the wails of the girls can be heard……”

Although it sounded like laughter as well, that might have been the mad laughter of the evil man.

The sixteen year old high school girl was at an age of sentimentality and delusions.

1. ↑ A school centered on preparing students to get into university.
2. ↑ Japanese schoolgirl uniforms are based on the sailor's uniform.

Chapter 3 - The Three Sisters' Endeavors

The pointer of the clock continued to move mercilessly, while the time for me to replenish my credits continued to decrease as well.

For me, who sighed in the campus that had a hint of coldness, numerous troubles were hidden in my heart.

For instance, this person.

"Danger! Segawa-kun!"

Ignoring the troubled people passing by, Sako-senpai rushed into the classroom while shouting.

The first years who gathered in the class gradually looked over in curiosity because of senpai's voice as well.

"There's not much time left! Look, the presence of the school festival is already filling the campus."

Sako-senpai said anxiously in front of me and Nimura who was sitting beside me.

"Nimura-kun, who is this bespectacled fatty?"

"Segawa-kun, I have never seen a specky fatty like this as well."

"Wai……! What's with your reactions!"

Nimura and I looked at Sako-senpai as though we were looking at someplace far away.

"Oh? The specky fatty seems to have said something just now."

"Segawa-kun, it's very dangerous. I think it's better if we distance ourselves from him. After all, it's not good if he dirties our houses. And it'll be troublesome if things mysteriously disappear from our fridges as well."

"Ohhh!? You— You're bearing a grudge, aren't you! About the matter before this! No! But there's no time for us to discuss these matters anymore! Be more mature! Face the crisis in the present! This is the time for the Road Observation Research Society to gather our strength!"

"What does he mean by bearing a grudge? I don't really understand, Segawa-kun."

"And by the way, why do I have this feeling of *'Having done such a thing, this guy actually still has the nerve to appear before us'*? Nimura-kun. And also, it meant that I broke my promise to Sora-chan and the others that day."

Forcibly dragging me away in the name of having a meeting, but starting to play the fool in the end— that person would be Sako-senpai.

The person who asked us to think of a way next week, but then forgot all about it to do other things was also Sako-senpai.

Just like that, of the two weeks that should have remained, only one week was left.

”By the way, the time for designing a party last time probably could be used to do a lot of other matters, isn’t that right, Segawa-kun?”

”Is that so? Shouldn’t we have some other things to do before gathering the Judo Club and asking Raika-san to do all those strange things?”

Even we couldn’t stand it anymore when things turn out like this. And actually, though Nimura is a considerate & easy person to get along with, it might be because of *that* that he snapped when his carefully tidied comfortable lodging was messed up.

Facing our anger that was out of his anticipation, bean-sized beads of sweat kept appearing on Sako-senpai’s forehead.

”It is all my fault! I’ve let down the both of you!”

Finally, Sako-senpai could only use his secret technique • Begging for Mercy while Kneeling.

In the end, we still went to a coffee shop during lunch break to have an emergency Road Observation Research Society meeting.

Blending in with the numerous students looking for a cheap lunch, we occupied a table, undergoing our meeting while eating lunch at the same time. The only thing that made me rejoice was the fact that Raika-san came with us as well.

”Anyways, there isn’t any time left! Time!”

Sako-senpai, who caused Nimura and I to give in with his grand apology that caused everyone in class to look in disbelief, now seems like he had forgotten all about what happened before, shouting loudly while stuffing the pile of fries on his plate into his mouth.

Senpai’s way of eating by gushing curry, fries and fried chicken, three types of food that is seriously imbalanced in nutrition, with coffee, is extremely unhealthy. I felt full just by looking at him eat.

”I will not refuse to help at this critical moment, but not having enough time is an undeniable fact. And we don’t have enough people helping out as well, as we’re the only ones after all.”

”Mnn, Nimura-kun is correct. Your focus is spot on. Here’s a reward.”

Sako-senpai threw a french fry into Nimura's bento. No matter how you look at it, he's really too much of a cheapskate.

By the way, Nimura's lunch was smoked salmon and bagels made from onions, along with basil sauce.

Of course, all of them were made by himself. He's meticulous, as usual.

"…… Impossible."

Raika-senpai said in a soft voice.

"Oda-kun, this is the time when we have to rack our brains to think of a way, so don't give these negative comments. As punishment, I will confiscate your mini hamburger……"

"Think again."

"Noooooooooo—!"

Sako-senpai's hand that was extended because of a malicious intention was stabbed by Raika-san using a fork without even batting an eyelid.

After that, senpai took out a new fork and continued her meal indifferently. It seems like senpai prepares a spare just for these situations. No matter if it's about this or her harisen, Raika-san is a really unpredictable person.

Ignoring Sako-senpai who was rolling around in pain beside us, we continued our discussion.

"I agree with Raika-san as well. It's impossible for us to finish if we start now."

"…… But it's a pity for the freshmen next year if they're unable to join the school festival."

Things are indeed as Raika-san said, though the prerequisite is that there are freshmen willing to join Roary.

"Oda-senpai. By the way, is there anything that Roary can give out during the school festival in the first place?"

Nimura's question was quite reasonable, however……

"Yuuta's observation reports."

"Errr, and that is……?"

"Yuuta likes breasts. He kept staring at breasts during the period of observation. Should we report about this?"

Raika-senpai adjusted her shirt on her chest while speaking expressionlessly.

Naturally, the gazes of the people in the student's restaurant were focused here, but not sure if it's lucky or unlucky, senpai wore a T-shirt below her clothes, so not too much of a problem was caused. However, the blow that I took was another story.

S- Senpai noticed!? M- M- My love…… Is facing a crisis!?

"But that isn't anything special for men, so it's probably meaningless even if you report this."

"Is that so, what a pity."

With a wry smile on his face, Nimura helped me stop Raika-san, thanks a lot…… My gratitude for him is worth about two servings of Häagen-Dazs, I suppose.

"D- Don't mess around! Let's do something that has more of a festival feel! I have always wanted to start a students' takoyaki stall or something like that! A haunted house designed for couples sounds nice as well!"

"It's probably too late for us to start preparing for that now. Besides, the place that we requested for is a classroom."

"The events that we're planning are first come first served, while not clashing events with the other clubs is an iron rule."

That was how Raika-san explained it. Errr, does that mean that all the things that we could possibly do were all taken by other clubs?

Reaching a dead end would refer to a situation like this. Nimura and I exchanged gazes and shrugged.

'Bam' Just at that moment, the sound of someone banging the table rang in the restaurant.

"Hmph! You guys don't understand at all! If there's no time, then just think of something that can be done in the remaining time!"

The people near the table were speechless, everyone stopped what they were doing to look at Sako-senpai.

"Ah…… Err……"

For a moment, I felt that Sako-senpai seemed to have said something of a maxim, but when I thought about it carefully, it was just an extremely irresponsible conclusion.

"Does that mean you want us to do things sloppily……"

”No, no! Absolutely not!”

Sako-senpai denied in agitation.

”How can you deny my wish to do my best in a limited time by saying that I want you to do things sloppily?”

Sako-senpai pounded the table and stood up, saying in a loud voice.

”That’s right. For example, art is refined because of the existence of strict constraints. Which means, it could be said that our current situation is an excellent opportunity!”

It was like Sako-senpai turned into a dictator for a certain country, giving a speech in agitation.

”However, it was Kaichou who wasted our time in the first place.”

”Ohh!? That’s absolutely correct!”

The extremely spirited Sako-senpai was defeated by Raika-san’s one sentence.

”Uuu~…… I admit my mistake, I won’t do it next time…… So let us think of a way together……”

Seeing senpai’s pathetic look while he cried lying on the table, it really makes people sympathize with him.

”We understand, senpai.”

”Segawa-kun……?”

”Let’s think of something that can be prepared in a week.”

”A- Are you willing to? You are willing to help a detestable and ugly fat pig like me?”

Errr….. You really don’t need to reproach yourself like that.

”We’re in Roary together after all.”

Declaring something that felt too optimistic, even to me, really felt rather embarrassing.

”Se…… Se…… Segawa-kuuuuuuuuuuuuuun!”

”Gyaaaaaaaaaah! Snooooooooooooot!”

Being publicly embraced tightly by senpai who was almost moved to tears, I immediately regreted saying what I said just now.

That evening.

”Hello? This is the Takanashi residence~♪”

The phone in the living room of the Takanashi residence rang, while Sora who was reading silently in the living room heard Miu politely answered the phone.

”Ah! What~ It’s just Oji-saaaan~”

”Mnn!?”

At the instant when she found out that Yuuta was on the phone, Sora got anxious immediately.

”Mnn, mnn…… Eh~ Yet again~?”

”W- Wait, Miu!”

Being unable to frankly say *‘Let me talk’*, Sora was burning in anxiety behind her sister.

”Fine, got it. That’s all.”

Though Miu was aware of her sister’s reaction long ago, she still hung up directly.

”Ah…… Ahhh……”

”Oji-san said that he can’t come back today as well.”

Miu declared to her crestfallen sister.

”What a pity, Onee-chan.”

”W- What pity?!”

”Well, since we finally finished the curry yesterday, haven’t you been thinking of what to make next while giggling?”

”I did not giggle!”

”Then what does the book say?”

”Uuu……!”

Sora hurriedly hid the cookbook that was stuck full of memos.

”T- That’s not important! Miu, did you take out Onii-chan’s clothes that have to be washed again?

”Well, it feels strange to wash the clothes along with Oji-san’s undergarments.”

”Don’t be so stubborn! Wouldn’t we be wasting water if we wash it a few times?”

”That’s why I said that it’s better to wash it in one go after Oji-san’s clothes pile up……”

”Miu!”

”Uuu~ Okay, fine.”

Miu who was berated by her sister looked rather unsatisfied.

”Listen, if you do it again, I’ll ask Onii-chan to reduce your pocket money.”

”Eh~”

It seems like the deduction of Miu’s pocket money troubled her quite a lot. Thus, disregarding her displeasure, she still assented by saying: “Alright.”

”For some reason~ I really feel like you’re becoming more and more like Yuri-san recently.”

”Eh…… I- Is that so?”

”Yes, you look exactly the same as her when you said *’wasting water’* just now.”

Though Miu wanted to tease Sora with her statement, Sora was unexpectedly happy with that, and even looked rather shy.

”Ah…… Is that so…… I’m becoming more and more like Yuri-san…… Ehehe.”

”Wait a minute, Onee-chan, why are you so happy?”

”Eh? I- I’m not happy.”

Though she said that, Sora still couldn’t refrain from a smile surfacing on her face.

”Really…… I’m like Yuri-san…… Ehehe……”

As though she was looking at an alien species, Miu looked at her giggling sister.

”Alright! Hina, let’s go out to buy something.”

Being called all of a sudden, Hina who was busy playing with her bunny doll looked rather confused.

”Buy stuff?

”Mnn. Today, as long as it’s something that Hina likes, I’ll buy anything for you.”

”Really! Hina wants a hanburger!”

”Okay~ Then let’s go.”

”Mnn!”

In a good mood, Sora immediately prepared to go out.

”Miu, you have to go as well. Hurry up and finish your preparations.”

Miu could only shrug in helplessness as she understood that saying anything to her sister right now would just be a waste of breath.

It seems like she flipped a certain switch in Sora’s heart.

”Okay, okay……”

It seems like dinnertime would be hectic yet again.

After contacting Sora-chan and the others, I walked back to the clubroom with heavy footsteps.

We planned to undergo our meeting until daybreak.

As I already said to Sako-senpai that we’re ‘doing it’, naturally I can’t just finish things sloppily.

”We must have a general theme by daybreak, and then we must list out the items that we need…...”

Just thinking about it made me feel that there is a mountain of tasks for us to do.

”Yuuta.”

When I was about to step on the staircase leading to the club building, Raika-san called me.

”Eh? What is it?”

”Kaichou told us to buy some things along the way.”

”Ah, that’s right.”

Since we’re going to have a meeting until daybreak, naturally we would need snacks and beverages.

”Then let’s go.”

Raika-san nodded slightly without an expression on her face, and then she walked forwards.

In the campus where the sun is setting slowly, only a few people were left, giving people a slightly lonesome feeling.

”Is it really okay letting Hina-chan and the others stay home like this?”

Raika-san asked suddenly.

”Ah…… To be frank, I’m a bit worried.”

I answered honestly.

”Even so, Sora-chan put in a lot of effort in helping out with the housework, so……”

”Is that so……”

”Ah, that’s right, that’s right, Hina can bathe and wash her hair herself now, though she must still wear a shower cap and would leave a lot of bubbles. Even so, she is still determined to bathe herself……”

Unknowingly, I was already happily chatting away about Hina.

After that, I mentioned that Sora-chan’s cooking is getting better and better, Miu-chan is actually scared to be alone, and often sneaks into Sora-chan or Hina’s room to sleep together at night.

On the road leading to the convenience store, I kept chattering on.

In some people’s eyes, those must be some rather unimportant matters. However, Raika-san still quietly listened to me speak.

We, who have to burn the midnight oil yet again, and must discuss about the event with Raika-san joining the discussion as well, found an answer in our lethargy and sleepiness, and the answer was a truth found through the elimination method.

Now that most of the clubs and societies had already decided on their activity, our options were extremely limited.

”Here are the results of our discussions…… Probably, the ones left that we can do are only these.”

First, a cafe. (But since both maid café and jazz café had been chosen by someone, so we can’t do them)

Second, a free of charge statement of our research, showing the controversial photos that Raika-san collected in the school.

Third, Raika-san’s cosplay photography session.

”I personally think that the third one is the best! And we can replenish our financial status as well!”

As the person who suggested the photography session, Sako-senpai kept puffing air from his nose while giving his opinions, but Raika-san’s answer was quite crisp as well.

”It’s not that I can’t, but the clothes are expensive.”

That’s right, from the results that we found from the internet when we were in discussion, most of the clothes used in cosplays were very expensive. Added to the fact that Raika-san’s figure is too great, it seemed like almost none of the ready-made clothes would fit.

”Uuu…… We probably don’t have enough time to order tailor made ones……”

Though Sako-senpai moaned at a side in pity, I fell in a bad mood just imagining Raika-san surrounded by countless people like Sako-senpai, so that’s why it’s a good thing for me that the proposal couldn’t be accepted.

And by the way, I must say something necessary as well.

”As for the second proposal, I would like to object with the reason of portrait rights.”

”Why? I have a lot of photos of Yuuta.”

With her expression calm, not even moving her brows, Raika-san looked at me while saying that.

Well of course, they include me staring at a cat’s ears H book, me all tied up and so on.

It’s no big deal if they just stay in Raika-san’s own collection, but I think it’s better if they’re not made public.

”Then…… We can only choose the café. But we must think of a gimmick for something like this.”

”This is a more unproblematic way, so let’s use this then.”

When Nimura and I reached a consensus with senpais' consent, we roughly reaffirmed the contents of the activity.

The crisis of a lack of time because of Sako-senpai was finally solved, while the senpais then decided to look for the school festival committee members to hand in our documents.

And I originally planned to go for my classes as well, however……

Raika-san unexpectedly stopped me.

"Yuuta, it's best if you go home first. Hina-chan and the others would worry about you."

"Just leave the matters of your attendance to me. Don't worry, just remember to send my regards to Miu-sama for me."

Sako-senpai promised to help heartily as well. Though it's inevitable that there would be a hint of unease in my heart, about matters like this, senpai probably…… can be trusted.

Just like that, I went on my way home after handing all my problems to the bespectacled fatty.

After walking out from the Ikebukuro station and climbing the small slope in front of my house, the familiar rooftop of my home came into view. At the same time, I saw three silhouettes walking out of the entrance as well.

It seems like I barely made it home before they went to school.

"Oi-tan!"

The first person who noticed me was Hina.

Hina ran over to me, hugging me with her whole body. It was a reunion that moved me slightly.

"Hina……"

Ah~ How incredible, Hina's dazzling smile could actually make my exhausted body feel vigorous again.

"Oi-tan! Welcome home!"

"I'm back…… Oi-tan is relieved…… Very relieved……"

Though I felt like I could barely stand, I still supported myself with all my effort.

"Oji-san, thanks for your hard work."

"M- Miu-chan……"

”Ah! Oji-san, you didn’t bathe yesterday, right? Don’t come too close to me~”

”……”

Reality is merciless. Even so, since they’re welcoming me home with a smile, a small thing like this doesn’t matter.

”Oi-tan, Oi-tan!”

”Hmm? What’s the matter, Hina?”

Hina pressed her face closer, while I hugged her neck.

”A kiss for you~”

After saying that, she kissed my cheek just like last time.

”Hina……!”

I was so moved that I almost fainted right on the spot.

That was a genuine surprise. Even though it’s something that an immature kid called Takashi-kun taught her, I’ll forgive him for now. And because of a change of kindergarten, Hina won’t see that kid again anyway!

”Hina likes Oi-tan the most!”

I couldn’t help but embrace Hina tightly, rubbing my cheek against Hina’s.

Hina laughed cheerfully as well, with a smile that would evaporate all lethargy in the world.

”Oh please, when are you going to stop?”

Sora-chan’s icy gaze put a stop to this extremely happy moment.

”Good morning, I’m back.”

”Hmph!”

Though I just wanted to brightly greet Sora-chan, she just turned her face away in displeasure.

”Miu, Hina, you’ll be late if you don’t hurry.”

”Okay~”

”Oi-tan, bye bye~”

Hina waved to me while holding Sora-chan's hands.

Ah, they're going out now. When I thought about that, I couldn't help but feel a hint of loneliness in my heart.

"That's right."

Sora-chan suddenly stopped and turned around to say.

"The dishes leftover yesterday are kept in the fridge. Eat them if you feel like it."

Sora-chan left quickly after saying that.

"Sora-chan……"

In the end, it seems like Sora-chan still kept a portion of dinner for me.

I'm really too happy.

Ah~ I couldn't refrain a smile from reaching my face.

But at that moment, I shivered all of a sudden, feeling the presence of someone at my back as well.

"Uuu……"

When I had a closer look, I saw a silhouette looking at me with a sharp gaze.

It was the high school girl that gave people a traditional feel that I met before this.

Her gaze was even fiercer than before, glaring at me as though she wanted to curse me to death.

What to do? Should I greet her……? Or……

At the moment when I hesitated on what to do, the high school girl marched towards me with large steps.

And after she glared at me even more ferociously……

"You wolf! I will definitely look for evidence, saving the children from your paws!"

"Hah……?"

I had completely no idea what she meant by that.

When I was still stunned in confusion, the high school girl had already walked far away.

”W- What’s with this……?”

Did my fuzzy brain cause me to see an illusion? But it doesn’t seem to be the first time that this happened……

I forgot to walk into the house, standing blankly without moving. But even if I stand there like that, I was still completely clueless, and couldn’t think of anything.

After that time, I often saw the silhouette of the high school girl near my house.

Sometimes, she would look like a maid eavesdropping on her employer’s secrets, while she would look like a sister hiding somewhere to cheer on her brother who dreams of being a professional baseball player…… In any case, her behavior was like that of a stalker.

Plus, after something like that happened last time, she probably wouldn’t talk to me anymore.

I tried to discuss with Nimura about the matter.

”If that’s so, she is probably in love with you.”

And that was how he answered me. If it were to be him, things might really be so.

”Impossible.”

I, who wore black pants in place of my usual jeans, denied Nimura’s opinion without further ado.

”Besides, her expression when she glared at me was extremely fierce, so it’s impossible for things to be like that.”

”I beg to differ. After all, the girl kept paying attention to you, didn’t she?”

”That’s not wrong, but……”

”Then it’s certain that she cares for you especially.”

While buttoning his shirt and putting on a black vest over it, Nimura tied a black sash on his waist. On Nimura, instead of saying that his attire fits very well, it’s better to say that it’s tailored exactly to suit him.

”I’m done. Segawa-chan, what do you think?”

”Wait a minute, my tie just refuses to get tied properly.”

”Let me have a look.”

With Nimura's help, I finally managed to tie my tie neatly.

If someone asks us why we're dressing up like this, I can only say that these are all preparations for the café that Roary is going to have during the school festival.

"Segawa-chan, you look pretty good in this."

Nimura gazed at my appearance of a waiter while saying.

"It feels ridiculous when you're the one who says that."

"How can you say that? It's true."

Though this guy talks somewhat frivolously, he's still quite a handsome man when he's not talking. Having a tall, slim figure, his good looking appearance as a waiter is breathtaking even in my eyes as a male.

After saying all that, I think I must explain a bit about our situation right now in order.

Firstly, what is this place?

We walked west from the Hachiouji station, turning into a small alley at a place full of pubs.

Walking further into the alley that gave people a dangerous feeling, we reached the coffee shop that we are at right now. The shop owner here seems to be an old friend of Sako-senpai's, and thus we came here to work part time, getting some experience of working at a café for the school festival along the way.

When I put it that way, people might think that Nimura and I actively wished to do so, but as usual, we were led here while knowing nothing, and were requested to put on a waiter's uniform after a very brief explanation.

"You're too slow."

As soon as we walked out from behind the shop, Sako-senpai immediately complained to us.

"It can't be helped, it's my first time wearing something like this……"

Just when I was about to rebuke him……

"Well! Well well well well well!"

A man who kept repeating the word 'Well' approached us. That's right, a man.

No matter in whose eyes, that person is a man, a tall, burly man with thick stubbles.

”They fit you two very~ well [1]!”

Even so, this person spoke in an extremely feminine manner, having lipstick on his large mouth and mascara painted above his eyelashes as well. Though the style of his clothes was similar to ours, there were some embroidery added on it, giving it a glittery feel.

And the strange burly man is the owner of this shop, Hiromi-chan.

I don’t know his surname, and am not even sure if Hiromi is his real name, as I only knew of his name after he winked at me while saying *‘Just call me Hiromi-chan’* the instant we met.

”What do you think, Hiromi-chan? These two have potential, right?”

”That’s true, both of them are fine *men*. As expected of Shun-chan, you have fine tastes.”

By the way, I only found out that Sako-senpai’s given name is Shuntarou just now as well. Though this is completely irrelevant.

”And so, I hope that Segawa-kun and Nimura-kun will learn how to be a true waiter at Hiromi-chan’s shop here.”

”A question!”

”What is it, Segawa-kun?”

”Assuming that I give in a hundred steps and treat this as waiter training…… But if you really have to say it, this shop, err…… opens at night?”

”That’s right, the shop is open from 7 p.m. until 5 a.m. the next day.”

Hiromi-chan answered unhesitatingly.

”Plus, instead of saying that this is a café, isn’t this place more like a pub?”

”Fufufu……”

Sako-senpai started to chuckle all of a sudden.

”That is exactly my main selling point!”

”Selling point……?”

”Mnn, most of the people who are known as college students long to embrace the adult world, drink booze, smoke, work part time, and so on! That’s what I’m aiming for! If the café that we Roary are starting gives off a more mature feel, customers would definitely keep flowing! And our pockets will go ‘ka-ching, ka-ching’ as well!”

Sako-senpai made a circle with his thumb and index finger, speaking words that were long outdated. By the way, what kind of café is senpai planning to do……

”And also, we have a rare talent like Nimura-kun as well. If we use him as our attraction, female customers would definitely flock to the café!”

”I’m very~ clear about Sako-senpai’s thoughts now. If so, it’s okay even if I don’t work h……”

”You dimwit! Since Nimura-kun has to serve the customers, work like making the coffee and tea would of course land on you, Segawa-kun!”

Oh, I see now.

Nimura would be a panda used to attract customers, while I would be the one doing odd jobs.

Even so, considering the acceptance of females, I am not Nimura’s match even if you turn me upside down, so this is still a reasonable distribution of work.

Looking from another perspective, being in charge behind the scenes might be easier as well.

”Be more confident. I believe that you can fare quite well after some training as well~”

”Err…… Can you please stop touching my chest here and there……”

After shifting my attention from Hiromi-chan’s warm gaze, a question suddenly surfaced in my heart.

”That’s right. If so, what do Sako-senpai and Raika-san have to do?”

”Mnn, we are refining a plan distinguished from other cafes.”

”…… Plan? What plan?”

”That’s a secret.”

Is it possible that…… The said secret actually means he didn’t think of anything at all? It might turn out to be a butler café in the end.

When I think about it, senpai might just slip away to the maid café of the Manga Club in the name of inspection.

As Sako-senpai can’t be trusted, I turned around and looked at Raika-san, trying to ask for her assistance.

At that moment, Raika-san was eating the cake that Hiromi-chan just served her in small mouthfuls.

Raika-san noticed my gaze, and then……

”Not for you.”

She expressionlessly moved the cake again. Is the food in this shop actually unimaginably delicious?

”Err, I don’t mean that……”

Now that it seems like Raika-san was bribed, though I’m not sure what Sako-senpai is up to, we have no other alternative but to work at Hiromi-chan’s shop for now.

”Oh well. Let’s do our best, Segawa-chan.”

Nimura said optimistically.

”Ho~ Hohoho! Don’t worry. I(atashi) will definitely~ teach • you • well ♪”

Do you have to keep fondling my chest……

Hearing Hiromi-chan’s laughter that was like the tinkle of a silver bell, it seems like a night of suspicion is just starting in Hachiouji.

At the same time Yuuta’s chastity is under danger……

Sora is feeling a similar sense of crisis as well.

In a deserted music room after school, there were silhouettes of two delicate girls present.

”Um, err…… Please don’t do this…… Okae-senpai.”

”It’s okay, Sora-chan. Just leave everything to me……”

”B- But……”

”Here, hold this. That’s right, gently…… But you have to hold it firmly…… Ahh, just like that. A bit lower…… Right, there, just there…… Put your name……!”

”Wa- Wait a minuuuuuuuuuuuuute!”

Just when the two were going to cross the final line, Maeshima Daiki rushed inside after kicking the door open with a force that almost broke it.

While Sora hurriedly covered her chest as though she suddenly came to her senses, cowering in the arms of the Choir Club president, Okae Kiyomi.

”What do you think you’re doing, Maeshima? Stop meddling.”

Kiyomi said while shrugging.

”W- What meddling, and what do you think *you’re* doing, Buchou!”

”As you can see, I am requesting someone to sign the club application form.”

”The atmosphere just now doesn’t seem to be like that no matter how you look at it.”

As Shuuji said, Kiyomi was hugging Sora from behind, trying to force Sora to sign the club application form with a rather rough method. Add extraordinary brute strength to a thought pattern incomprehensible to the common man, and you would get the club president before our eyes. The more troubling issue is, Kiyomi’s action did not have even a hint of malice, while Sora admires the motivation and personality of the club president, and that resulted in the situation where Daiki came to the rescue.

”I don’t think a matter like forcing someone to sign is right!”

”Don’t put it that way, I’m just wishing for the matters done to be unable to be undone.

”Isn’t that the same! And wasn’t the person who said that we can’t do things recklessly you, Buchou! And also, you’re a bit too close to Takanashi!”

”Heh heh~ Are you jealous?”

”Urgh……”

Looking at Kiyomi who was wantonly stroking Sora’s body, Daiki could only grit his teeth.

”I’ll just use this chance to make this clear, I like cute girls the most!”

Even so, the declaration wasn’t really surprising, while everyone who heard those words wore an expression saying ‘Fine, fine’. That is, the fact that this club president is an oddball is similar to the fact that we must stop when the traffic lights turn red, a fact known to all.

”It was because I wanted a lot of cute girls like Takanashi-san to stand in a row before my eyes that I became the president of the Choir Club. However, the cute Takanashi-san had left, leaving dumb things that don’t even have a hint of cuteness like Daiki in the club! Daiki even got out of control recently! If so, isn’t it best if I just bring the cute Takanashi-san back here with my own hands! After all, she is so cute!”

Every time she heard the word ‘cute’, Sora who was in Kiyomi’s arms would blush and cower.

”So sorry for not being cute! And also, you became the club president just for a reason like this!”

”Can there be any other reason!”

Completely ignoring Sora’s presence, Kiyomi and Daiki continued their meaningless argument.

Finally, Sora spoke after being unable to hold herself back anymore.

”Erm…… I think…… I still can’t rejoin the club……”

”Why!? Is it because this idiot troubling you!?”

”Is it because you hate Buchou’s sexual harassment!?”

Daiki and Kiyomi said at the same time while pointing at each other.

Sora shook her head.

”My departure caused everyone a lot of trouble. If I were to return yet again, a thing like this…… I can’t do it. When I left, I made my decision…… after mustering a lot of courage.”

Sora said in a weak voice.

Seeing Sora’s forlorn appearance, even Daiki and Kiyomi couldn’t force her anymore.

Having the timid and shy Sora to muster her courage and say all this, it caused the two to be unable to say anything in rebuttal.

”And also, I’m already busy with matters at home.”

”…… Takanashi-san, are you still living with your uncle right now?”

Not saying anything before this, Youko inquired.

”Erm, yes.”

”What is your uncle working as? Is he still unmarried?”

”Err, well…… Onii-chan is…… Wait, that’s not right! Oji-san is still a college student, that’s why……”

”C- College student……?”

The one who reacted to her words was Daiki.

Uh oh, was what Sora thought in her heart due to Daiki’s reaction.

Aside from her teacher, this matter was originally a secret to everyone, because of Sora's unwillingness for other people to have meaningless worries for her, and she doesn't wish for… other people to have inappropriate delusions. If so, it might cause trouble to Yuuta, after all.

If this goes on, Yuuta's matters would be thoroughly dug out by the others, so Sora could not conceal the wavering in her heart.

"S- Sorry!"

After shouting loudly, Sora dashed out of the room, while the speed of her escape caused almost all of the Choir Club members present to be dumbfounded.

"An uncle who is a college student……"

"And also, she called him Onii-chan just now."

Shuuji and Youko said in turn. *Something is fishy*, the thought surfaced in each person's mind.

"Well…… We'll have to do some detailed investigations about this."

Kiyomi spoke as though she was representing all of the people present who held doubts.

At the same time when the bell signifying the end of classes rang, I woke up from my state of dozing off as well.

I, who worked at the coffee shop until late night yesterday and missed the last train because of that, unceremoniously refused Hiromi-chan's invitation for me to stay overnight at his shop, and I slept at Nimura's place in the end.

Just like that, I went for class after taking just a short nap.

After the long day ends, I can finally go home now.

No matter what, I must get hope first. Period! I vowed to myself in my heart when I walked out of the classroom.

"Segawa-ku~n ♪"

As soon as I walked out of the classroom, I straightaway bumped into Sako-senpai, who wore a smile that anyone would find suspicious at first glance. Sako-senpai pressed his face that gave off an oily glister, and spoke to me:

"I want to ask you for a favor……"

”No.”

”That quick!? At least hear me out!”

”Utterly refused.”

”Darn…… If so, then I’ll kidnap you as usua…… Guwagh!?”

Just at the moment Sako-senpai was planning to blow on his whistle to summon the Rugby Club members, what came to my rescue was a harisen…… No, it was Raika-san.

”Yuuta, leave this to me.”

”Raika-san, thank you!”

”Don’t mention it. To repay me, let me go out with Hina-chan for a day.”

”…… I will consider it.”

In the end, Raika-san did it just to fulfill her selfish desires. Even so, her condition could be said as favorable to me. As for the date, I hope to add the condition of letting me tag along as well. While thinking about all these in my mind, I stepped on the road leading home. In any case, I just want to have a nice long sleep after seeing the three sisters at home.

When I reached Ikebukuro after an hour’s journey, it wasn’t the time for the sun to set yet.

I immediately sent a message to Sora-chan and Miu-chan.

’I’m reaching home soon.’

I explained my current situation with just a short sentence.

I am actually not that good at doing things like writing emails or letters, so the contents of my writing always have that feel to them. Of course, I don’t know how to use various emoticons as well.

I received a reply message not five minutes after I sent it.

”It’s Miu-chan’s…… Hmmm…… Let’s see……”

The message that Miu-chan sent was labeled with a title of *’Emergency Situation!’*.

It made me open the text message in anxiety, and the contents were—

Right now, Hina would be at a small kindergarten on the outskirts of the Ikebukuro district.

Though the kindergartens at Hachiouji could be said as top notch, the kindergartens here are first class as well.

I, who came to fetch Hina, walked past the unexpectedly wide kindergarten forecourt, and headed to the classrooms.

”Sensei, good~ bye~”

I saw a boy turning around to wave vigorously at the young caretaker as he was about to leave.

On the other hand, there was a female that seemed to be the boy’s mother waiting outside the door, and she hugged the boy who ran towards her.

It was a scene that would make people smile naturally.

With her gaze full of pleasure, the young caretaker watched the boy leave as well.

”Hello.”

I greeted the caretaker somewhat nervously.

”Ahh, Segawa-san.”

The caretaker directed a smile at me.

She is the teacher in charge of taking care of Hina at the new kindergarten after we moved to the Takanashi residence.

Though I feel bad for Hina because of the frequent moving, so that Hina would be able to blend into a new environment successfully and go for her classes happily, the caretaker over here probably put in a lot of effort.

”It seems like Oji-san hasn’t been fetching Hina for quite some time now.”

”Mnn…… Yeah……”

Lately, the job of fetching Hina home almost always falls onto the shoulders of Sora-chan and Miu-chan.

People might think that I, who keep letting a primary schooler and a middle schooler to do all this, am a terrible guardian.

As for Miu-chan, it seems like she is in a situation when it's hard for her to leave school as well.

Because of that, she sent that message asking me to fetch Hina.

I even thought that something terrible happened because of Miu-chan labeling it as an emergency situation.

Even so, it's fortunate that I'm able to come home earlier today as well……

"Oi-tan!"

"Oof!?

As soon as she saw me, Hina rushed over like a cannonball.

"Hi- Hina…… Didn't I tell you that it's dangerous dashing here like this……"

"Ah! I forgod."

Well, people do make mistakes, after all. I'll disregard this matter this time.

"Oi-tan is fetching me today?"

"Oh, that's right. We'll have to buy some things before going home as well."

"Buy stuff! Hina's tweats!"

"Not really, we're buying the materials needed for dinner."

That was what Miu-chan asked me to do as well.

"Really……"

When she heard that we're not going to buy her treats, Hina's face immediately fell.

"Relax, Oi-tan will buy Hina's treats as well."

"Yay!"

I'm really a guardian who spoils his kids.

But thinking of the various troubles that arise daily, it made me feel like satisfying Hina's small wishes as well.

I brought Hina to a supermarket nearby.

To buy the things that we would need in the near future, the items that I placed into my shopping basket were mainly discounted food and frozen food.

The amount of food that a family of four needs in a week is quite considerable.

Though I forgot all about it before this, for me, who almost didn't sleep from yesterday, the weight is quite difficult to endure.

Plus, Hina kept pestering me to let her sit on my shoulders, not knowing where she learnt about that. And my decision to let Hina on my shoulders in surrender is really a huge mistake, because Hina wasn't willing to come down after that.

With my hands stuffed full of shopping bags and a three year old toddler on my shoulders, it was really a rather challenging muscle training. It really isn't something that anyone should try after burning the midnight oil. At the moment I was about to go home after finishing my shopping, Miu-chan sent a message to me yet again.

And the content was…… Another surprising request.

'Come over and pick me up!'

It was both brief and clear. Though the instructions on it were quite simple, the more troubling matter is that the reason for it wasn't written. Wouldn't that be worrisome?

Naturally, I couldn't just leave it aside, and thus I walked towards the primary school that Miu-chan studies in.

Though the dangers of a young man sneaking into the school grounds of a primary school flit past my mind, but since Hina is tagging along, I probably wouldn't be labeled as a suspicious person, alerting the police.

"Over here!"

Even so, my worries were unfounded, as Miu-chan was waiting for me at the school entrance.

Miu-chan waved at me, while I quickened my footsteps as though I was urged.

For some reason, a crowd of boys surrounded Miu-chan as well.

…… And anyways, for what reason did Miu-chan call me over here?

Before I spoke my question, Miu-chan unusually leaned on me somewhat affectionately.

"You've been really too slow, Yuuta-san~"

”Oh, sorry, sorry…… Um, Yuuta-san?”

That seemed to be the first time Miu-chan called me by name.

But why at this moment……

”Let me introduce to you all, this person is my, Miu’s, boy~ friend~”

Miu-chan said while hooking her arm with mine.

”B- Boyfriend…… meaning.”

”Miu-chan’s boyfriend……!”

In a flash, all of the boys gathered here seemed to have suffered a serious blow.

”Miu-san! Didn’t you tell me that you like me!”

”Of course, I like Yoshiki-kun as well. However, I like you more as a friend……”

”H- How can this be……”

Yoshiki-kun’s face fell in disappointment.

I was finally clear about the situation, more or less.

The primary school boys gather here seem to be love rivals competing for Miu-chan.

And because the situation turned too complicated, Miu-chan called me over here.

If they realize that their true rival is a man way older than them, they can’t continue to argue…… That’s probably it.

”T- This incompetent looking man is not good enough for Miu-chan!”

”Hey! Look here, kid!”

I couldn’t help but rebut the kid who said that I’m ‘incompetent’ while cockily pointing at me.

”That’s right! An ossan with a kid like him isn’t good enough for Miu-san at all!”

”Who are you calling an ossan! And the child is……”

They probably misunderstood because Hina was sitting on my shoulders, even so…… That was really quite hurtful.

The boys present started to argue about who is the most suitable for Miu-chan.

Just at that moment, Miu-chan lowered her head looking somewhat melancholic……

”Indeed. Though this person is gentle, he is somewhat incompetent, slow and indecisive. When we went to eat sushi, he only has the financial ability to bring me for sushi-go-round……”

”Erm, Miu-chan……”

There are some things that can’t be said just because they are the truth.

”Even so, just because of this, he cannot lose me!”

Realistic acting would probably refer to a situation like this.

”I am happy because of everyone’s thoughts……. However, I am sorry.”

When I looked closer, I could even see beads of tears glistening in Miu-chan’s eyes.

Seeing a beautiful girl look like that before their eyes, the immature kids were all shocked…… Then, after saying things like *‘I won’t give up’, ‘I’ll keep waiting for you’* and the like, they gradually left, while Miu-chan called each of their names in apparent gratitude.

Errr…… Am I at the press conference for a retiring idol?

Though I’m the one present who should be the most shocked, that matter gave me a mystifying sense of heartbrokenness.

After all of them left, Miu-chan let go of my arm, lightly twirled in a circle and returned to our previous distance.

Miu-chan pressed her index finger on her cheek in slight guilt, cutely sticking her tongue out for a moment.

”Ehehe☆ Thanks, Oji-san. You helped out a lot.”

”Miu-chan, I have a lot to say to you……”

”Really. Being angry at such~ a cute lover, how mean~”

”I say……”

”Miu Nee-tan, what’s a boyfan?”

”I’ll tell Hina when Hina is older.”

As though nothing had happened, Miu-chan stepped on the road leading home in front of us. It seems like she's already used to being confessed to by countless boys.

Though I really felt like saying a word or two, as Miu-chan naturally took one of the shopping bags in my hands, it made me lose the chance of speaking.

…… It's easy for men to misunderstand your consideration, Miu-chan.

When the three of us reached home, we saw a few pairs of unfamiliar shoes arranged at the entrance, and casual footwear for males were among them, while Sora-chan's familiar loafers were there as well.

"Wa~ How unusual! They're probably Onee-chan's friends."

Miu-chan who saw the shoes said after thinking for awhile.

"Oi-tan, Hina is hungwy~ Let's eat the snacks~"

I walked towards the kitchen along with Hina and Miu-chan first, and after keeping our spoils in the fridge, I gave Hina some milk and snacks.

Along the way, we could hear the chatter and laughter of boys and girls from the second floor, though Sora-chan's voice wasn't heard too much……

While I gradually started to mind it, especially the part about the boys' voices.

Speaking of which, since they're Sora-chan's friends, perhaps I should go greet them as well. I'm her guardian after all.

That made me think about the matters that I discussed with Hanamura-senpai before this. Being clueless about Sora-chan's condition at school isn't good as well. And when I think about it, today was the first time I went to Miu-chan's school as well.

If they are good friends with Sora-chan, I do wish to at least show my face there, and if I can successfully join their conversations, I might be able to know a bit about Sora-chan's condition at school.

"Oji-san, do you want to serve Onee-chan and the others tea?"

Seeming as though she noticed my thoughts, Miu-chan handed me a tray. Miu-chan really is considerate.

"O- Okay. I'll leave Hina to you then."

I prepared five portions of red tea made from tea bags, and placed some still appropriate snacks on the tray as well.

I walked to the second floor and breathed in slightly at the front door to Sora-chan's room. After all, the first impression is very important in any situation.

"Sora-chan, it's me……"

That was what I said after I lightly knocked on the door.

'Who is it?'

The unfamiliar voice of a girl came from the room.

"I- It's my sister! W- Wait here for a moment!"

After that, a seam about the width of two fists appeared, while Sora-chan showed her face from behind the door.

Sora-chan's whole face was flushed, and seemed like she wouldn't let me see inside the room no matter what.

Speaking of which, I've never went into Sora-chan's room before this, but that's understandable.

Even with any other father, if he goes into the room of his middle school daughter without permission, their relationship would break up just like that.

"O- Onii-chan! Why do you have to pick today to come back earlier!"

Sora-chan's voice was unusually weak, not like her usual voice at all. Furthermore, it felt like she was rather embarrassed.

Speaking of which, I am complained to by Sora-chan even though I'm back early so unusually, it really feels somewhat sad.

"A- Anyways, don't come to the second floor! You can't come up!"

"Err…… But aren't your friends here as well? If so, I should at least go in and greet them."

"No means no!"

Sora-chan lowered her voice in stubborn refusal, and her attitude was somewhat agitated as well. That's really quite hurtful.

Even so, she's a girl in adolescence after all. Thinking about that, the mystifyingly sense of embarrassment when Nee-san helped serve tea or fruit juice whenever I brought friends back

home resurfaced in my mind. Is this what they mean by history will always repeat itself…… If so, oh well.

I'll leave the matter of deeply engraving in my memories the appearance of the rude males who entered Sora-chan's room earlier than me for next time. After making that decision, I handed the tray in my hands to Sora-chan.

"Well, at least take the tea. I'll make dinner, so you can chat all you want."

"Mnn, mnn. That's all, thanks."

Sora-chan took the tray and looked visibly relieved, but a hand suddenly reached out and stopped the door as Sora-chan was about to close it.

'Isn't it the voice of a man?'

Sora-chan looked behind her in shock.

'If it's Takanashi-san's uncle, I want to greet him as well! I'm the club president after all!'

The clear, strong voice of a girl came from inside the room.

'That's right, I think that it's better if we greet him as well.'

This time, it's a rather calm voice that seemed to come from a girl as well.

'Takanashi, isn't it fine if we just greet him?'

Oh, it's the voice of a boy. My body couldn't help but shudder for a moment

'Oi! Takanashi!'

And lastly, it's the voice of an unusually energetic boy.

"B- But……"

Sora-chan looked at me and into her room in, evidently flustered……

"…… Come in then."

In the end, Sora-chan opened the door with her head lowered.

I've mentioned this before, it's my first time entering Sora-chan's room.

The interior of the room was rather neat and tidy as expected of a girl's room, while there weren't many unnecessary items. As for the things that were somewhat unexpected, they were the electronic keyboard at a corner of the room and an astoundingly large stack of mangas and novels tidily arranged on bookshelves. It was a room that reflected Sora-chan's demure nature.

Even though I've lived here for a few months now, there are still a few rooms that I haven't entered in this house.

For example, Sora-chan and Miu-chan's rooms, and the room that can't be opened on the second floor. Apart from that, it seems like there's an attic on the rooftop as well, but I don't even know where the entrance of that place is.

And on the first time I entered Sora-chan's room, there were already four guests waiting inside.

"Nice to meet you, I am Segawa Yuuta."

Though I didn't really get nervous in the presence of middle schoolers, it feels somewhat strange to be stared at by them as well.

"So you're Takanashi-san's uncle?"

Like a representative for the others, the influential looking girl standing by the door inquired.

It looks like she was the one who stopped the door just now.

"That's right. I'm a college student, and am currently Sora-chan and her sisters' guardian."

"So things are really like this…… We were quite surprised when we first knew of this today as well."

That's understandable. A man whose appearance is only slightly older than a high school student is actually a guardian, so it can't be helped if people are surprised by this. Facing a response like this, I could only smile wryly.

Speaking of which, is it because Sora-chan mentioned something about me that they came to investigate?

"I'm sorry, I haven't introduced myself yet. I am Okae Kiyomi, the president of the Choir Club."

Choir Club!? I couldn't help but turn to look at Sora-chan.

On the other hand, Sora-chan blushed for some reason and lowered her gaze. How should I say this….. I have never seen Sora-chan like this before.

"They are members of the Choir Club as well. And Takanashi-san was originally part of the Choir Club as well."

Is that so. So Sora-chan was from the Choir Club…… It's the first time I heard of it.

And I finally understood why Sora-chan's usual cries have the power to echo through the whole town.

"Takanashi-san was originally the hope of us Choir Club as well. Whenever she sings, boys would immediately gather outside the music room, while Takanashi-san was already admired by many boys from the start as well."

"Oh…… I see."

The president of the Choir Club seemed to be recalling a grand occasion, saying with an enchanted expression, while Sora-chan cowered instead, looking as though she wanted to look for a place to hide in.

"N- No…… I don't……"

That's new. Is Sora-chan a girl like this? Even though she usually gives people the impression of being extremely blunt……

Not noticing my surprise, the club president pointed at the short-haired boy whose face was still somewhat boyish for a middle schooler while saying:

"That loud-mouthed fellow joined the club because of Takanashi-san as well."

"I'm telling you that's not it!"

Though the middle school boy protested with his whole face red, my thoughts were only on Sora-chan.

The thing that surprised me was the fact that Sora-chan was like a tame lamb in front of her friends.

No, instead of saying tame, it feels more like shyness. How can this be?

"That's right, oji-san. You should help us convince her to stay in the Choir Club."

"Err…… Stay in the Choir Club?"

"Okae-senpai, please stop this."

Sora-chan said in an almost inaudible voice.

"Oji-san, if you're at home, Sora-chan shouldn't have any reason to give up on the club, isn't that right?"

”Give up? …… Ah!”

I finally understood the situation, and realized the reason that the president kept saying things in past tense.

After Nee-san’s accident, I’ve heard about Sora-chan leaving her club when the three sisters moved to Hachiouji. So the club that Sora-chan left was the Choir Club……

”Sora-chan didn’t return to the club.”

”…… I’ve left now, so I can’t go back.”

”Why?! Isn’t it fine if this ossan is here!”

”Daiki, stop that.”

That boy started to shout, while the other prim looking boy berated him.

On the other hand, the gloomy looking girl who kept staring at us without a word before this said immediately:

”I’m just helping out in the Choir Club, and am not planning to force her to come back. However, since she said that she can’t go back, that would indicate that she probably wishes to.”

It seems reasonable. I get it, it seems like these kids are here wishing to bring Sora-chan back to their club.

…… That would mean that there are people worrying for Sora-chan at school as well. Thinking about that, it gave me a slight sense of relief.

”Wouldn’t it be okay if this ossan takes care of Takanashi’s sisters? Since this ossan already moved here specially, then just leave things to this ossan and have fun with us in the club!”

Three times, he said it for a total of three times now. Kid, a first year in college can’t count as an ossan yet.

The boy somehow~ seems as though he’s looking for trouble. Onii-san is somewhat unhappy with that, you know.

The middle school boy seemed to have noticed my hesitant gaze as well, and rudely glared back at me.

Even so, Sora-chan disregarded the two of us glaring at each other and spoke:

”…… That won’t work…… And also……”

”Takanashi, why not?!”

Oi, Brat! What were you thinking when you shouted at our Sora-chan!

I refrained from acting on the impulse of wanting to teach the kid a lesson.

Still, I want to know the reason as well. In my college life, Roary takes up quite a large part of it as well. After all, the friends that we chose ourselves are probably very precious.

”Sora-chan, I think that it’s okay if you want to go back as well…..”

After hearing my words, Sora-chan just shook her head.

Speaking of which, my unreliability might be one of the reasons as well. Though I’m not sure how long the activities of a middle school club would take, if Hina can’t be fetched on time, everyone would suffer…… A girl with a strong sense of responsibility like Sora-chan definitely wouldn’t return to the Choir Club if her family is not in a state when she is at ease.

It seems like the source of the trouble is quite complicated.

”Err…… So you’re called Okae-san?”

”That’s right.”

”I believe that all of you care for Sora-chan very much, but can you let her think about it herself? I think Sora-chan probably just hasn’t prepared herself for it yet, that’s why…… I’m very sorry.”

”Onii-chan……”

Sora-chan raised her head in shock.

”In any case…… Please wait for some time. Please.”

I pleaded to the club president with my head lowered.

When one can’t think of a good way to solve problems, the best thing to do is to face it sincerely.

I remember that Nee-san taught me about that before this.

Being pleaded by a person five years older than them like this, made the club president seem unable to continue as well.

And I left the room with a now awkward atmosphere long ago.

When I walked out of the room, the boy whose voice is the loudest among the four was still staring at me unblinkingly.

No, instead of saying that he stared at me, it might be more accurate to say that he was glaring at me.

Since I couldn't just bathe and go to sleep in a situation when guests are present, I could only waste away time by watching television in the living room. After all, the matter worried me, and I wish to think of a way for Sora-chan to return to her club as well.

"Oji-san, were you chased out?"

Miu-chan asked.

"That's not it. A guardian probably shouldn't grab the spotlight except for greeting people in front of his child's school friends after all."

Sora-chan seemed quite uncomfortable as well, and probably felt rather embarrassed.

I once underwent that period as well. Even so……

"…… Err, Miu-chan. I'm just asking this, but does Sora-chan…… Get along well with those kids?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well…… I have this feeling that Sora-chan is somewhat different from usual. You might be able to say that she's tense, or you can also say that she's more introverted…… And doesn't talk much."

Usually, people would probably be more casual in the presence of friends of the same age.

"Oh! That's because Onee-chan is an '*uchibenkei* [2] '." Ohh! It seems like a rather difficult word came from the primary school student's mouth.

The said uchibenkei would refer to that, right? A lion at home, a mouse abroad.

"Does that mean Sora-chan would act gentler when she's outside?"

Actually, even if she doesn't act like it, Sora-chan is already a capable, kind child.

"Yes~ Instead of saying that she's acting like that, you should say that it's Onee-chan's usual appearance."

"Eh!?"

That…… Soft-spoken appearance is how Sora-chan appears to be usually!?

"Onee-chan…… seems to be rather bad at coping with men."

”EH—!?”

I got another shock.

”But Sora-chan is rather unforgiving to me…… Is it because I don’t count as a man in her eyes?”

”Shouldn’t Oji-san be more special than that?”

Though Miu-chan showed me a somewhat questioning smile, I really didn’t know what she meant.

…… After all, I could count as family. And Miu-chan just said that Sora-chan is an uchibenkei, so is this how things are?

Even so, Sora-chan is bad at coping with men……. How unexpected.

*So there are still so many things that I don’t know.*I couldn’t help but exclaim in my heart.

”Sorry for bothering you.”

Youko said at the entrance.

”Oh, mnn……”

When the club president dashed to the house with the other members of the Choir Club using ‘locating lost items’ as an excuse, though Sora was somewhat flustered, she still managed to end the first experience of her friends coming to her house without any problems. By the way, the said lost item was the pen that Sora almost used to sign the club application form before this.

Though the excuse was somewhat forced, their thoughts still managed to make Sora happy.

When they were about to leave, Youko went closer to Sora’s ears and said:

”I saw your bookshelf. You have quite a nice hobby. And also…… Let me lend you those that already have next volumes. If possible…… I would like to see your drawers besides your bookshelves as well.”

After saying that, the corner of Youko’s mouth curled in a rare smile. It felt as though she came just to see Sora’s bookshelves. After watching Youko leave with a wry smile on her face, Sora finally relaxed.

Just like that, it seems like they wouldn’t give up on bringing her back to the Choir Club, but the rough method should be slightly improved.

”Eh…… Is there anything wrong? Miu.”

When Sora returned to the living room, she saw Miu standing in the kitchen, busying herself with something.

”I helped Onee-chan to heat dinner just now.”

After saying that, Miu pointed at the sofa.

”It seems like Oji-san was quite tired. He fell asleep after making dinner even though he hasn’t eaten it yet. I took Hina for a bath as well then asked her to go to sleep too.”

”Ah, sorry. Miu.”

Sora’s gaze fell on Yuuta, who was lying on the sofa in a deep slumber.

”That’s right, Oji-san asked about Onee-chan just now.”

”Eh? A- About what!?”

”Oji-san said that Onee-chan is somewhat tense in front of your school friends, so he’s worried about that.”

”Uuu……. W- What did you say then, Miu?”

”I answered honestly that Onee-chan is bad at coping with men.”

”Uuu…… Miu……. Though it’s true, but……”

I originally didn’t want Onii-chan to know about that. Sora could only say that to herself in a low voice.

Actually, Sora isn’t good at dealing with even people of the same sex, while her introverted nature is always a matter that Sora doesn’t wish people to know of. And it might be because of that, she is the only person in the family who doesn’t really get along with Raika-san and the others……

At the moment when Sora once again fell into despair, Miu did not forget to rub salt into Sora’s wound.

”That’s right, I said that Oji-san is a special existence for Onee-chan as well.”

Sora, who was temporarily speechless, flushed in a flash.

”D- Don’t speak of these unimportant matters, Miu!”

”Oh~ So it’s unimportant~”

Miu smiled mischievously, escaping from the living room after easily avoiding Sora’s attack.

How did the younger sister who was afraid of other people and kept tugging on her dress when she was little undergo such a large change now? In the end, a confused Sora and a sleeping Yuuta were left in the living room.

Sora looked at Yuuta’s slumbering face.

After that, she walked away and returned with a blanket.

”Seriously, Onii-chan always gives other people trouble…… How troublesome.”

Sora muttered while covering Yuuta with the blanket.

Thinking of looking closely at Yuuta’s sleeping face, Sora went closer.

Not for Sale or Rent

Why can she only treat Yuuta normally? Even Sora wasn't sure about that.

The members of the Choir Club who walked down the slope towards the station from the Takanashi residence were shrouded in an indescribable atmosphere.

There were a lot of reasons for that. For example, the Takanashi residence is located at an expensive land at the center of the city, and was far larger than they imagined. Sora's sister, Miu, has long hair, and is a rare beauty. The uncle who acts as their guardian is really a young man who isn't even twenty yet. And the most important thing is, their surprise assault ended in failure.

"How troublesome."

Kiyomi said all of a sudden.

"Being stubborn to that extent, it seems like it's impossible for her to return immediately no matter how hard we try."

"Indeed…… The only thing left, is probably to wait."

Shuuji seems to agree to Kiyomi's opinion as well.

"If Kaichou continues to badger her at that time, the situation would only turn sourer."

"Uuu…… Youko, can't you be more merciful with your words."

"W- What is this! Why are you all giving up!"

Among the four, only Daiki still shouted in unwillingness.

"Darn! It's all that guy's fault. If that guy didn't say something like that……!"

"Oi, calm down, Maeshima."

"…… I…… I'll go talk to her again!"

After saying that, Daiki turned around and walked back to the Takanashi residence.

Daiki, who returned to the front of Takanashi residence prepared to press the doorbell once again.

At that moment, he saw Sora's silhouette through the glass windows of the courtyard.

Daiki, whose heart surged with curiosity, finally decided to sneak into the courtyard.

The scene that Daiki saw was one that he definitely didn't want to witness.

Sora was covering the slumbering Yuuta with a blanket.

If that's all, it wouldn't be anything special.

However, Daiki unfortunately noticed one thing.

He noticed Sora wearing an expression that he had never seen before……

Noticing the slightly shy, but extremely sweet radiant smile.

It might be because Daiki kept yearning for Takanashi Sora since he started school that he could perceive that truth.

"That guy…… It's because of the presence of that guy……"

Daiki gritted his teeth, as though he wanted to break his teeth to pieces.

Actually extending his evil paws to a middle school girl, that guy is definitely a hentai!

I must snatch the girl that I love from the hands of this hentai! He secretly vowed to himself in his heart.

At the same time, a high school girl whose heart was filled with justice watched the actions of those people from far away.

"There weren't any cries today…… And perhaps, those children perceived the same truth as me……?"

Are they planning to journey into that den infested with evil? I might not be the only person who wishes to save the three Takanashi sisters from the claws of the hentai. Thinking about that, it made her feel as though she obtained a thousand comrades.

1. ↥ Note that he ends his sentences with わ(wa), which is usually used by females
2. ↥ A person who acts tough at home while acting timid outside. The meaning is same as the idiom a *lion at home, a mouse abroad*

Chapter 4 - Yuri's Secret

The world is full of wonders and mysteries.

I think this is a fact that I first experienced from the activities of the Road Observation Research Society.

Though people who know everything do not exist in this world, it seems that I only have a very one-sided understanding of other people.

Each and every matter is undergone in complex, intricate ways, and is extremely confusing.

However, even with matters that are encountered in coincidence, another truth might be hidden behind it sometimes as well.

I would never dream that Nee-san could still surprise me so much now that over half a year had passed since I heard her voice.

On the day when the school festival was only a few days away, I experienced a shock rarely felt in my life.

It all started three days ago—

When Sora-chan's friends were still in the house, I accidentally fell asleep

After that, it might be because I fell asleep at an inappropriate time it was hard for me to sleep during late night, and could only wait for sleepiness to descend on me while turning restlessly in my bed. About three in the morning, I, who noticed an unidentified sound in the house, crawled out of my bed with the attitude of *'I can't sleep anyway……'*

The doors and windows in the house were all closed, and added with the presence of the security devices installed using a hefty sum of money by Nii-san who dotes on his daughters, the possibility of burglars getting in is small.

Thus, it's probably Miu-chan who is staying up late, wandering the house.

As her guardian, I should caution her against this. With this thought in my mind, I softly walked on the stairs leading to the second floor.

"Eh? Sora-chan?"

Out of my expectations, the one who was staying up wandering the house was actually Sora-chan.

I coincidentally bumped into her while she was leaving the room.

”Onii-chan!? W- why!?”

”Err, I’ve heard some sounds coming from upstairs, so…… Eh? What’s that?”

I pointed at the square package in Sora-chan’s hands while asking.

”T- This is…… Nothing at all!”

Sora-chan hurriedly hid the package behind her in a panic.

”This doesn’t seem like nothing to me……. Whatever, it doesn’t matter anyways. And also, don’t stay up too late, you have to go to school tomorrow as well, don’t you?”

”Mnn, mnn, sorry.”

After saying that, Sora-chan slipped back to her room in a flash.

I only noticed one thing after Sora-chan disappeared from my view.

The room that Sora-chan came out from was the innermost room on the second floor.

That’s right, the *‘room that couldn’t be opened’* that I minded so much before this, and also Nee-san’s room.

The room was locked, while Sora-chan told me that the key was lost.

Sora-chan expressed an abnormal refusal when I approached the door in curiosity before this as well.

”According to Sora-chan, shouldn’t the things inside be unneeded?”

I tried to reaffirm once more, and realized that the door was still locked.

After all, Sora-chan seemed to be locking the door when she left the room, so that wasn’t much of a surprise to me.

”What should I think about this?”

Saying that the key was missing is a lie.

Thinking that Sora-chan had a need to lie to me to conceal the truth, it was quite a huge blow.

”Well, this feeling…… How depressing.”

Am I still not to be trusted?

No, no, perhaps there might be something that she doesn't want me to know, looking from the perspective of a girl……?

Then what would that be! I scolded myself in my heart.

I think that it would be fine if she just tells me honestly about that, and there's no need to lie. If she just explains to me the whole matter, I wouldn't mind it especially……. Probably.

Though I'm saying that…… Even I, myself, put in a lot of effort just to find a place to hide H books, so there's actually not much difference between us.

That night, the matter ended just like that.

However, I, who am just an ordinary person, had no way to know that it would actually be a shocking start.

As expected of one of the few metropolises in Tokyo, shopping is quite convenient in Ikebukuro.

To buy the items required for the school festival café, and because of the *'plan distinguished from the other clubs'*, I did not go to school today, and prepared to welcome Nimura and the other members of Roary to my home. As the school festival was fast approaching, I was allowed to skip the classes today as well.

Regarding these matters, I've mentioned this to Sora-chan and the others as well, and they decided to return earlier in the end. Though the fact that Sako-senpai is coming gave Sora-chan some displeasure, since she had brought her friends home just recently, she could only agree reluctantly. While on this night, I plan to let everyone enjoy a happy dinner like the steamboat we had last time.

However……

"What does this mean! Miu-sama isn't here at all! This is not what you've promised! Segawa-kun!"

Allowing a person who says things like that as soon as he arrives at another person's home, is this really okay?

"I sure didn't make any promises. And senpai, primary school students should be at school at this time in the first place."

"What! That's serious! Though the wearing of bloomers had been banned recently, I can't miss Miu-sama in sports attire as well! No! From the view of a collector, this is absolutely mandatory! Let's go! Segawa-kun, we must go to the primary school field for a spin! Miu-sama's beautiful legs…… Guwagh!"

The person who used a harisen attack to collapse Sako-senpai in a pool of blood was no other than Raika-san.

With a calm expression on her face as though nothing had happened, she started to confirm the items she brought.

”This is an orgel for Hina-chan, these would be hairbands for Miu-chan, while these are silk ribbons that seem like they would match Sora-chan, and then……”

…… Wait a minute, then what about things for the school festival?

As I was staring in shock, Nimura lightly placed his hand on my shoulders.

”Segawa-chan, I understand. I understand your feelings very well. I actually don’t really feel like saying this, but even when I came here with the others from Hachiouji, Sako-senpai didn’t mention the plan about the café at all.”

W- What!

”Then what did you buy at Ikebukuro?”

”Just presents for Sora-chan and the others, perhaps? Though Sako-senpai bought quite a lot as well, it feels like they’re completely unrelated to a café. We went to an anime merchandise shop and a bookshop…… And then the supermarket.”

Well, Sako-senpai just seems like his mind is full of his own selfish desires.

”Raika-san! Don’t you two have a secret plan!?”

”That’s Kaichou’s business.”

…… Raika-san probably came just to see Hina and the others.

On the other hand, Sako-senpai who collapsed on the floor, looking like a dying whale that was flushed to the shore……

”I say, Nimura, would we be in any trouble if there aren’t any customers at our shop tomorrow?”

”Nope, probably not. The expenses are all paid by Sako-senpai anyways.”

We shrugged in helplessness.

The school festival is on the day after tomorrow, and we can’t do anything more now.

It seems like the main activity today is for the members of Roary to have dinner with Sora-chan and the others after some time.

However, it seemed like Sako-senpai did not have the same thoughts.

”Relax, just leave everything to me.”

After senpai recovered from the attack, he started to play games on his phone without a trace of worry on his face.

He was pressing the keypad non-stop while seriously sweet talking the girls in his game.

I really don’t understand him……

On the other hand, we used the ingredients bought by Nimura and the others and started our cooking preparations.

In this rare chance, Raika-san was planning to cook western dishes using luxurious butter stew as the main dish. Nimura and I were just in charge of the preparations.

”Ah! This is bad~”

Nimura, who was silently peeling the vegetables for some time, seemed to have made an unusual mistake.

It seemed like he accidentally spilled the dirty water used to wash the vegetables on himself.

”…… Seems like the stains can’t be removed easily. Take it off. I’ll wash it for you.”

”Segawa-chan, I don’t have any other clothes on me.”

”I’ll let you borrow my sports wear.”

After that conversation, I tossed Nimura’s shirt into the washing machine and walked upstairs to my luggage.

At that moment, I never thought that the juncture of a sudden situation would occur.

It was something that happened in front of Nee-san’s *’room that can’t be opened’*.

Though I knew that Sora-chan sneaked inside yesterday, I didn’t notice that something was different from before in front of the door.

”…… What’s this?”

I suddenly noticed what seemed to be a paper slip poking out from the seam below the door.

Curiosity killed the cat— there's an idiom that says just that, while the actions that I took after proved that.

The item below the door was a photo, and some notes were jotted down behind the photo as well.

'Taken by Shingo-san at Big Sight.'

The words were written behind the photo, while a date was on it as well.

At the instant when I saw the front part of the photo, I was speechless for a moment.

"This is……!?"

In the photo, wearing a piercingly vivid wig and unusually tight fitting clothes, Nee-san was posing for the camera. She wore a professional level smile, making a pose that definitely underwent a lot of practices.

…… What the heck?

My brain crashed.

I never saw Nee-san like this before.

Of course, as a modern college student, naturally it's impossible that I don't know what this is.

'Cosplay'.

A recreational activity where one wears clothes from a video game or an anime and acts out the character.

When Sako-senpai suggested a photo session of Raika-san before this, we once searched online and found out that countless of people are undergoing this activity, while quite a lot of beauties are among them as well. There are even shops selling these especially. It's a recreational activity popular overseas that everyone knows of…… That was my understanding about it.

However……

Knowing that Nee-san was actually a cosplayer would be a whole different story.

Plus, I lived together with her for nineteen years now, and I was actually ignorant about it.

Speaking of which, what's with the revealing clothing!?

As an acclaimed beauty, it looks good on Nee-san, and she looks exceptionally sharp when compared with the other cosplayers on camera, that's right…… And the photographer was Nii-san.

It was like I was suddenly pulled into a foreign world, having a huge shock.

With my sports clothes, I blankly walked back to the washing machine.

”What is it? What took you so long?”

How should I explain this matter to the embarrassed looking Nimura, who had only a shirt and underwear on? Even I, myself, haven’t finished gathering my thoughts yet.

”Err…… How should I say this……”

When I think about it, even if Nee-san cosplayed as her hobby, it isn’t something illegal anyways.

It was just too big of a blow for me, who was kept in the dark these nineteen years, so I was just somewhat shaken.

”Actually, it’s nothing…… It’s probably nothing, right?”

”Err…… Segawa-chan, can you first give me the clothes?”

”Ah, sorry.”

Since it’s this time already, I’ll just tell him. Nimura once met Nee-san anyways.

And I will feel more at ease if I confide in someone as well.

”Actually…… I found this just now……”

I waved the photo before Nimura’s eyes.

And I started to explain the matter.

”I never thought Yuri-san would have such a hobby……”

Nimura’s response was calmer than I thought.

He was indeed somewhat surprised, but did not have the prejudice of some people towards otakus. Even so, I only decided to tell him because I know that he’s trustworthy as well.

”Segawa-chan, you didn’t know at all?”

”Mnn, though Nee-san liked mangas from long before, and had a lot of books by her side, there wasn’t any sign of anything like this when she lived with me before this.”

No matter how I thought back, I couldn’t find any impression that Nee-san likes to cosplay.

”Even so, it might be an interest that she found later, perhaps when she went with her friends one time, and she got addicted or something like that.”

”Hmm~m……”

Indeed, it’s not impossible. Nee-san is rather easygoing, and she wouldn’t refuse when other people ask her for favors…… No, Nee-san’s personality is that of one that ‘couldn’t refuse’, and she doesn’t reject getting in the spotlight as well.

”If so, isn’t the mystery solved then?”

”What mystery?”

”Did you say this before? Saying that you don’t know how Yuri-san met her husband.”

”Ah……”

Their jobs were different, and their ages were over ten years apart. The mystery of their common point that troubled me in the past finally got an answer.

The one who takes photo, and the one who had photos taken. In any case, that would be their common interest.

If so, another question would pop out.

Do their three daughters know of their parents’ interests?

Disregarding the young Hina for a moment, but what about Sora-chan and Miu-chan?

”I say, do Sora-chan and the others know of this matter?”

”How would I know? Why don’t you just ask them directly?”

”Err…… But, well…… That’s somewhat……”

”Well, for some people, this might be an interest that they don’t want other people to know of.”

Hearing my vague words, Nimura immediately realized my worries.

Speaking of which, Nee-san didn’t mention that to me as well.

”I’ve decided, I’ll pretend I never saw this thing.”

Just when I was about to take the photo back, another hand snatched the photo from behind.

”Not bad…… This isn’t bad at all!”

It was Sako-senpai.

Why is he here?

”Hmph! Oda-kun said that you guys had disappeared, and asked me to look for you, but you two are actually admiring such a good thing by yourselves! So mean! It’s too mean of you! Pretty things should be shared with other people!”

Senpai stared at Nee-san’s photo, saying while breathing raggedly.

Even I, who had long got used to senpai’s usual manner, couldn’t help but feel somewhat disgusted.

Speaking of which, didn’t this person address the fourteen year old Sora-chan as an oba-san before this……

”Erm…… Sako-senpai……?”

”Segawa-kun, this is it! This is a divine revelation! My gray colored brain cells were indeed correct!”

Turning around to say all this, the lens of Sako-senpai’s glasses were covered in a layer of mist because of his excitement.

Uh oh. When the thought flashed past my mind, it was already too late.

It seems like this flipped a certain switch in Sako-senpai’s heart.

”This is the time to reveal things to you! The plan that us Roary has!”

Sako-senpai started to explain his idea in earnest, while Raika-san rushed over after hearing the hubbub as well.

Unexpectedly, the person who was the happiest after knowing of senpai’s plan was Raika-san.

…… But the most shocked person would definitely be me.

As promised, Sora-chan and Miu-chan came home slightly earlier than usual.

”I’m back~”

The one who gave a cheery greeting and returned first was Miu-chan.

”Eh? Only Oji-san is here? Where are Nimura-san and the others?”

”Err, I’m letting them stay in my room for a moment.”

”Eh? Why not the living room? There are even video games and the TV there……”

”T- There are some reasons.”

As we were in conversation, the door opened yet again, and Sora-chan returned as well.

”I’m back. Ah, everyone’s here……”

Probably because she saw the shoes arranged at the entrance, Sora-chan walked into the living room somewhat cautiously.

”Eh…… Where’s Raika-san?”

”Haha, they’re in my room right now. Sora-chan, can I have a moment with you?”

Actually, I was the one who convinced them to stay in my room.

I told them that this is our own family’s business.

After all, I really couldn’t predict how things would turn out like this.

Apart from Nee-san’s cosplay photos, I have to mind the feelings of the uchibenkei eldest daughter as well.

Confusion filled Sora-chan’s face, while I breathed in deeply.

”Sora-chan…… Erm……”

I showed the photo to Sora-chan and Miu-chan.

”W- Well…… I found this thing.”

”Eh! Ehhhhh!? K- KYAAAAAAAAAA!”

Sora-chan screamed with her face pale, while Miu-chan hugged her head with an *uh oh* expression on her face.

”No! Was the room opened!!”

She even skipped another scream.

Sora-chan dashed out of the living room like the wind up the stairs, and the sounds of a door handle turning could be heard after a second. It seemed like Sora-chan was confirming that the room that couldn’t be opened was locked or not.

After that, Sora-chan ran back to the living room with a quick pace once more.

”It’s not open! Why is the photo here!”

”…… It was in the seams of the door. Sora-chan, you entered the room yesterday, didn’t you?”

Hearing my words, Sora-chan lowered her head in despair.

”A- Ahhh…… I’m sorry, Yuri-san.”

”Onee-chan, you can only speak the truth now……”

Miu-chan consoled Sora-chan.

It seems like they are going to explain things to me.

The photo was placed in our center, while Sora-chan, Miu-chan and I sat by the table.

By the way, Hina is still at the kindergarten.

We planned to fetch Hina home after this meeti…… Or I should say communication ends.

However, we maintained a silence for five minutes or so.

In that time, only the faint sound of the clock ticking could be heard.

The three of us were probably thinking of how we should speak.

Sora-chan’s despaired expression was especially pitiful.

”Oji-san finally…… realized……”

The person who spoke first was Miu-chan.

Miu-chan cautiously observed my response.

”Err…… That’s right, I realized.”

Even I, myself, think that the answer is stupid.

Perhaps the heavy atmosphere caused me to be somewhat abnormal.

On the other hand, Sora-chan suddenly spoke in agitation at this moment.

”L- Listen to me! This is…… Erm, well……. That’s right! A celebration! It’s for a celebration!”

The excuse was really too forced.

Actually, I really don’t understand for what reason they have to hide things from me until this extent.

”You don’t need to hide things from me. This is Nee-san’s hobby, isn’t that right?”

”O- Onii-chan knows about this?”

From the responses of the two, it seems to be an interest known to the whole family.

”No, I didn’t know before this. This is probably the second most shocking thing to me in my life.”

”Indeed, we knew it from the first time we met you.”

That should be true.

Parents having the same hobby but keeping it secret from their children, that would be really strange.

”Err…… So Nee-san and Shingo-san knew each other because of this hobby?”

Sora-chan nodded silently. So things are really like this.

”It seems like they met at a Comiket. Having a photographer date a cosplayer is rather unusual, while Yuri-san was a charismatic cosplayer as well. It is said that dad’s photographer friends hate him quite much for this.”

”P- Photographer? Cosplayer?”

Miu-chan’s explanation was filled with too many terms unknown to me. Anyways, from the situation, it seems like Shingo-san won the hand of Nee-san through rare effort or luck. Things were probably like that.

”Err…… Charismatic……? Was Nee-san that famous?”

”Yuri-san is really amazing!”

Sora-chan was the one who said that instead.

”Not only is Yuri-san beautiful, she knows anime very well as well. Even with minor roles, she would make her clothes herself. No matter what type of clothing, her works resemble the

originals much more than other finished products. There were even people from different organizations and groups who wish for Yuri-san to make their clothes!"

Sora-chan was quite agitated. Indeed, Nee-san was always making clothes and things like that.

It's just that I had no idea that they were clothes for cosplay that time.

I recall that Nee-san would buy fashion magazines sometimes and make clothes exactly the same as the ones in the magazines. With her amazing techniques, it saved us a lot on clothing expenses.

And because of that, I once thought that Nee-san wants to work in fashion-related industries.

In the end, Nee-san's skills were all trained from making clothes for cosplay.

"I originally thought that I know everything about Nee-san, but things aren't so……"

Answers for the mysteries long buried are surfacing one after another.

However, I couldn't just feel happy about this.

"But why did Nee-san hide this from me? Though we're siblings."

Seeing that Sora-chan tried so hard to hide it from me gave me a huge blow as well.

Not wanting to let me know about some things, isn't it unreasonable for a family?

Sora-chan and the others knew about it, while only I was in the dark. It's just too unfair.

"This is……. Quite understandable."

"Mnn, yeah, that's right."

And for some reason, it seems like the two feel that it's reasonable as well.

"After all, it is most embarrassing if one is seen by his or her family when doing cosplay or attending a doujinshi event."

"Yuri-san once said herself, *'This definitely can't be known to my brother. If he is aware of this, there is no other choice but to kill him, or drag him in this as well'*."

"What the heck……" -_-'

Nee-san seemed to have planned two horrifying choices to give me when I wasn't aware of it.

Saying that she *can't let her brother know no matter what*, I really can't understand it.

”…… Ah, since you’re so clear about this, perhaps you’re cosplaying as well?”

”Err, ahh…… About that……”

After I asked her that, Sora-chan suddenly started to stammer.

”Not at all. I might have a slight interest in playing the roles. But I have completely no idea where the character comes from, so I’m just the type who *’just likes to dress up’*. Even so, I am probably not against people taking cute pictures of me.”

Not against people taking photos of her, this indeed matches Miu-chan’s image.

Judging from Miu-chan’s personality, she might really become a model or an idol one day.

”Actually, Onee-chan is much more engrossed with it compared with me.”

”M- Miu!”

Sora-chan blushed after her sister said that.

”Is that so?”

”Err…… Mnn, mnn, just a little.”

Sora-chan spoke with her head lowered, looking rather embarrassed.

Well, it’s really quite surprising. I’m not sure if it’s because of her father’s or Nee-san’s influence, Sora-chan actually has an unexpected interest like this as well. Even so, I didn’t know that she wasn’t good at dealing with men as well……

Perhaps girls just have a lot of different faces.

I never thought that a small house like this could hide so many secrets…… How astounding.

”I’m not doing cosplay…… If you really want me to say it, I’m more interested in the conventions ……”

”Conventions? Errr…… About the thing called doujinshis or something like that?”

Sora-chan nodded.

Knowing Sako-senpai for half a year or so, it would be stranger if I didn’t know about these things well.

Besides, many special, thin books are stored in the clubroom of Roary as well.

I have an impression about the activity that is called a doujinshi convention. As I recall, they are held each summer and winter.

”According to Yuri-san, I can’t join any conventions before I’m fifteen. On the other hand, I can ask for her help to buy any books that I want.”

”Ahh, that’s why……”

I understood yet another thing. So it was because of this that Nee-san asked me to her house during last summer?

”Yuri-san said that she would bring me to a convention next year.”

”And Yuri-san said that she wants to let Onee-chan cosplay as well.”

”…… I’ve said that I’m unwilling to. However, Yuri-san said that doing so can change my introverted behavior…… And she said that she would definitely make good looking clothes for me…… Not caring for my opinion at all……”

I couldn’t help but smile wryly. Stubborn Nee-san would indeed do such a thing.

Tears glittered faintly in Sora-chan’s eyes.

This is a fact that Sora-chan understood all along.

But when she speaks it out in reality, it might have made her feel that it is a promise that can’t be kept.

Because Nee-san isn’t here anymore.

No matter whether it’s Sora-chan or Miu-chan, both of them looked downcast, a similar dark expression on both of their faces.

All of a sudden, the family meeting was filled with sorrow.

”If so, I’ll accompany you there. To the…… convention or something.”

”Eh……”

”Mn. Though I can’t be the same as Nee-san.”

”N- No no no no no! Definitely not!”

”Eh? Why?”

”No means no!”

It’s fine with Nee-san, but not with me?

The blow on me is quite huge as well.

”After all, how could Onee-chan buy those books that expose her interests without an exception in front of Oji-san~”

”B- Be quiet!”

Though I wasn’t that sure about things, it feels like this is a part that Sora-chan cannot give in.

Having cosplay, dojinshis and the like, the world of the otakus seems to be quite complicated.

”The said interests…… refer to……?”

”You can’t ask more about this part, Oji-san. To some people, it’s a thing harder to say than being asked the color of their underwear. Oji-san, to understand the heart of a girl, you have to be more delicate.”

”Wait a minute! Don’t phrase things in that misleading way! I’m very normal!”

Even though I wasn’t too sure, it seems like it’s better not to delve too deeply into things.

”I- It’s about time! I’ll go fetch Hina!”

After saying that, Sora-chan used her full speed once again to dash out of the house.

Hmm…… I understand that Sora-chan is embarrassed, but…… In reality, the person who is cosplaying is my sister. Though I can understand Sora-chan’s feelings, shouldn’t I be the one who is the most surprised?

”Ah, I have to change as well…… Oji-san, shouldn’t it be about time for your friends in Roary to come out from your room?”

The thoughtful girl said that to me.

”Err…… Actually, that’s not the only thing I had to say.”

However…… I don’t feel optimistic about the things that I am about to say.

I have no way to judge how this would fare on Sako-senpai’s devilish plan.

Sora ran out of house with her face flushed.

Would Onii-chan think that I'm some kind of an odd girl……? Actually, Sora couldn't meet Yuuta's gaze halfway through the conversation.

Because of her father's interests, Sora grew up naturally in contact with animes and mangas. To Sora, who grew up seeing photos of beautiful cosplays, these things are her interests that she is quite familiar with.

For Sora, who was somewhat introverted from the start, it matches her interests somewhat, and that was why Sora naturally got interested in the matter as well.

However, Sora wasn't so enthusiastic that she would join cosplay by herself, neither could she do something so embarrassing as well.*The clothes would only look good on someone as beautiful as Yuri-san, and for instance, Raika-san……*

Beads of tears welled up in Sora's eyes. Though nobody was doing anything wrong, Sora started to feel sad for some reason.

I, who have to fetch Hina, cannot wear an expression like this. Thinking of that, Sora was about to take out her handkerchief. But it seemed like she forgot to keep it on herself, and couldn't find it at all. At the moment when Sora sighed in helplessness……

"…… The hanky, use it."

Someone handed a squarely folded white handkerchief to Sora.

"Ah……"

"You don't need to worry about this, Sora-san."

"…… Shiori-san."

Seeing a familiar face made Sora sigh in relief. It was the onee-san who lives opposite to her house that Sora always meets at the waste disposal area.

In the city where even neighbors don't have much interaction, the high school girl who lives opposite to the Takanashi residence is no exception, and does not have much ties to the Takanashi family.

The most that they knew about each other would be their names, and would greet each other when they meet.

However, those were only Sora and Miu's thoughts.

The female living opposite to the Takanashi residence is called Kitahara Shiori.

She appears to be a fresh, staid person, and radiates the aura of one born in a good family. However, compared with the image of a 'lady' born in a high class residential area at the center of the city, her personality is slightly more unique.

In reality, the school that Kitahara Shiori studies at is a traditional prestigious girls' school where daughters of wealthy families gather.

Having good behavior and the experience of joining the Student Council, she, who can be said as a classic good student can be counted as a person who has too much of a sense of justice and responsibility, looking from another perspective.

Plus, her personality is that of one who sometimes…… No, it should be said as one who always jumps to conclusions.

While the matter that caught her eye right now would be the three sisters living opposite to her house whose parents were said to have died in an accident.

Just when she felt that it was a long time since she saw the three sisters, a young man suddenly brought them back home one day.

She heard that the young man is still a college student as well.

And he frequently returns home only in the morning.

Is it possible that the three sisters are deceived by a bad man……?

Without further ado, such a thought surfaced in Shiori's heart.

That's because she would often hear Sora's cries.

From that day on, Shiori's innate personality of always jumping into conclusions ran out of control. In her heart, the matter had long developed to the situation of *'The three sisters were deceived by a man who proclaimed himself as a distant relative after their parents passed away. Not only does the man have his eyes on their money, he even lusts after the bodies of the young girls that still have a hint of youth!?'*

At the same time, this triggered a mystifying obligation of *'I must save the three sisters!'* in Shiori's heart.

"Are you crying? If you have any trouble, you can confide in me any time."

She grabbed Sora's hand and said all of a sudden.

"Err, okay……"

"Don't worry, I'm on the same side as you all."

That made Sora feel somewhat troubled. Having someone say such a thing to her all of a sudden caused her to be unable to give a response.

Sora dabbed the handkerchief at the corners of her eyes, and returned it to Shiori after thanking her.

…… *Shiori-san probably wasn't saying that she is actually a cosplayer as well, is she?* Though Sora thought in confusion, she still knew that Shiori was actually caring for her.

"Erm…… I'm fine. Something got into my eye."

"Really? If you have anything to say, you can look for me any time. I have always kept an eye on everything."

After hearing her words, Sora smiled meaningfully and walked towards the kindergarten once more.

When Sora turned around to have a look, she noticed that Shiori was still looking at her with an agitated gaze.

"Actually making a young beauty like her cry…… Unforgivable! I must vanquish that scum!"

The soul of justice in Shiori's heart finally confirmed her true enemy.

At the same time, another play was acting out as well.

A certain boy was looking at Shiori and Sora's interactions from afar as well. That boy would be Maeshima Daiki.

As Sora's classmate and member of the same club, the boy did not miss the handkerchief that Sora dropped at the classroom entrance as she immediately ran out of the classroom as soon as classes ended.

Just when Daiki picked up the handkerchief and was about to give chase, Hanamura Youko said coolly:

"Maeshima, can't you just put the hanky into Takashima-san's drawer?"

"But…… Isn't directly giving it to her better?"

"In medieval times of Europe, deliberately dropping their hankies for other people to pick up seemed to be a way for females to express love. However, making a fuss out of a hankie would just annoy other people."

After a light ‘hmph’, Youko turned around to look at Daiki.

”Takanashi-san will be here tomorrow anyways, so just leave it there.”

Youko, who said all that with a cold smile, actually believed in her heart that Daiki would definitely give chase.

Though Daiki felt displeased because of Youko’s attitude, of course, he still decided to hand the handkerchief back to her himself.

That’s because Daiki thought, *I might have to protect Takanashi from being bullied by the hentai.*

However, the job was unexpectedly snatched by an unfamiliar high school girl.

”…… She’s crying?”

Seeing Sora’s action of wiping away her tears, a bout of pain descended on Daiki’s chest.

Daiki only realized that he had scrunched the handkerchief in his hands into a ball after he came back to his senses.

What can I do? For my silent, gentle, kind, delicate, cute and pure classmate, what can I do for her?

Before Daiki found the opportunity to speak to her, Sora already turned around and ran to the opposite direction.

Daiki could only look in vain while Sora left.

”The person who made her cry…… was that guy, huh.”

It’s definitely the hentai’s fault. Having a middle school girl live together with a person who is just a college student…… It’s too strange.

The innocence of the boy started to blaze in a somewhat biased direction.

At this moment, nobody knew that the wishful thinking of him and a high school girl was actually pointed to the wrong direction.

After Sora-chan ran out, I could only explain to Miu-chan the task that senpai and the others gave to me in helplessness.

”That’s too difficult~ It’s just impossible.”

Miu-chan's reaction was just as I expected.

So that the café would suit his tastes more…… No, so that the function would be more successful, Sako-senpai thought of a plan 'distinguished from the other clubs'.

In short, the plan would be a 'Cosplay Café'.

Senpai came to Ikebukuro to look for clothes and data so that he could prepare for waiters who would dress up as characters in animes and games.

Plus, I feel that senpai was planning to reel the three sisters in from the start.

I understand now. With Raika-san, and if Sora-chan and the others are willing to help, the seats would definitely be full.

Nimura would handle the female customers, so the plan is absolutely perfect.

As expected of Sako-senpai's usual style, his idea totally depended on other people.

Usually, I would definitely refuse the suggestion on the spot, but even I have no other choice but to accept it this time.

After all, the school festival is on the day after tomorrow.

We don't have any time to think of new ideas right now, and also…… I just found out that my own sister was actually a cosplayer, so I would be lying if I say that I am completely uninterested in cosplay, as I at least want to know more about Nee-san. In this aspect, I think that this is quite a good chance.

"Please, you'd just need to serve tea."

"Hmm~mmm…… Actually, I'm fine with that."

"Really! Miu-chan!"

"Yes. But in return, I want some payment."

Miu-chan said some materialistic words.

"Ah, the payment can't be paid by Oji-san, because that would be the money of our family. If it were to be paid from the profits of the shop, I'll probably accept it. Coincidentally, I have some clothes that I wish to buy as well."

"Of course there'll be payment! And also, Sako-senpai would definitely be willing to buy anything!"

Though senpai didn't make any such promise to me, if Miu-chan requests it, it feels like it would be okay no matter what she wants Sako-senpai to do. If so, it's about time to ask senpai and the others out.

"…… Phew, now my aim is half complete."

Miu-chan did not miss my relieved mumblings.

"Oji-san, what were you aiming for?"

"Uwaa! You heard it!"

It seems like I've accidentally blurted it out.

"Hey hey, what is Oji-san aiming for?"

"Uuuu……"

Miu-chan seemed to have noticed something, and kept inquiring.

"Actually…… Raika-san said that she would join as well if all three of you take part……"

And if we couldn't find clothes in time, she would arrive wearing a bunny girl costume.

Sako-senpai said that he can borrow a bunny girl costume using relations with Hiromi-chan, while those words were the critical point that made me agree to this plan.

Of course, I had some reservations about this before knowing that Nee-san was a cosplayer, but…… Since it's something that a person like Nee-san would like, it probably contains some happy parts.

On the other hand, an expression of disbelief appeared on Miu-chan's face.

"Seriously, Oji-san just wants your cute nieces to help out because you wish to see Raika-san doing cosplay. Aren't you a bit lacking in delicacy?"

"You really don't need to say tha…… No, you're right."

Seeing Miu-chan peering at me with her slanted gaze that played out the nature of a little devil, I could only surrender immediately.

Seeing my response, the young beauty whose appearance rivals that of an idol, laughed softly.

"I wasn't against this from the start, so it's fine, really. But it's best if you don't let Onee-chan know of this, because it will definitely make her unhappy."

”…… Why?”

Miu-chan did not answer my questions.

”Hehe! Why is it, I wonder? And also, I won’t join if Onee-chan isn’t joining as well, so do your best, Oji-san.”

”Eh? I- Is that so? But it would be a huge help even if only Miu-chan is willing to help……”

”Hoho! Ah, ah, Oji-san, remember to buy the new lip balm for me in exchange for not saying anything to Onee-chan. There was a commercial on TV as well, so Oji-san should probably know, don’t you?”

”Miu-chan~…… Fine, fine.”

Though Miu-chan’s cuteness rivals that of an idol, being made to dance in the palms of a ten year old girl feels……

By the way, I’ll have to make things clear more or less before Sora-chan returns.

I walked up the stairs back to my room.

”That’s how things are.”

Though the bedroom that was modified from Nii-san’s room was slightly drab, I still think that I’ve made everything quite convenient. There’s a table, a calculator, bookshelves, a bed. My collection of H book would be hidden under the bed.

However, my H books that should have been carefully hidden were all displayed on the floor.

”Fourteen books of large breasts, four books of normal sized, twenty three mangas. Yuuta indeed likes large breasts.”

”What the heck are you counting!? Raika-san! Please don’t search other people’s rooms!”

I hurriedly grabbed my books and stuffed them into a drawer, glaring at Raika-san after that.

”No~ Don’t look at me with that beast-like gaze.”

Raika-san said while covering her breasts with a cold, unchanging expression on her face.

”Nimura, you should at least help to stop her~”

”Ahaha, don’t you think that it would be just a waste of effort?”

I have the same thoughts as well, but this is really too hurtful. It just feels like my love is collapsing bit by bit……

”A thing like that is completely unimportant, Segawa-kun!”

Sako-senpai pounded on my desk and said with an agitated tone.

What do you mean by unimportant? Shouldn’t you guys have at least shielded my H books?

”I even prepared a brand new digital SLR camera and camera lens for the photography session!”

”Ah, when you mention it, we did go to Yamada Electronics and BIC Camera as soon as we arrived at Ikebukuro.”

Judging from Nimura’s testimonies, it seems like the cosplay café was indeed planned beforehand.

Plus, though it should be a café, it suddenly turned into a photography session. That’s probably just the gears in Sako-senpai’s brain turning.

Even so, those items were just bought today.

Though I wasn’t familiar with cameras, those would at least need a hundred thousand yen.

The impulse, or I should say enthusiasm, that caused so much money to be used up just for the school festival is really admirable. Though I have no intention to follow suit.

”Hmm, if so, I’ll go convince them myself! Where is Miu-sama!”

”I think it’s better if senpai doesn’t do that. Besides, Miu-chan already agreed to it conditionally.”

”What! Why didn’t you say so earlier? You ill-mannered fellow! Even so, as expected of our rare talent who is nominated as our next president! Now us Roary is invincible!”

”I don’t want that nomination at all, thank you very much. And didn’t I say that it’s *’conditional’*? Miu-chan’s condition is that Sora-chan must be willing to join as well.”

”What!? Well then, hurry up and convince her to join. If not, let’s summon the Rugby Club members to catch her, and tickle her until she agrees.”

”If senpai dares to do such a thing to Sora-chan, I’ll immediately hand you in to the police. If so, senpai, you will have to continue your life bearing the tarnished name of a sex offender. I should say that I wish to call the police even now.”

What a meaningless dispute.

”I don’t wanna, I don’t wanna! I wanna see Miu-sama and Hina-sama cosplaying! I- want- to-see!”

Senpai lied down on the floor, saying while flailing his limbs. It might be better to say that he was like a child flailing on the floor, but in reality, he looked more like a dying beetle. I imagined senpai as a person using his whole body to wipe my floorboards, refraining myself from caring about him.

”It’s the same even if you throw a tantrum, Sako-senpai. In any case, I would have to discuss things once more with Sora-chan when she returns. I wish to know more about Nee-san’s cosplays as well.”

”Yuuta, I want to see Hina-chan and Sora-chan doing cosplay as well.”

With a tinge of red on her face, Raika-san approached and said to me.

”I- I get it, I’ll tell Sora-chan about it.”

”I’m counting on you, Yuuta. If Sora-chan and the others are willing to cosplay as cute characters, I’ll do anything you want, even posing as a bunny girl that gives you a good view of the huge breasts that you are so fond of.”

Though I have a lot to say about this, her words of doing anything I want gave me an unknown sense of excitement.

However, I never thought things would turn out like that……

”Sigh! Isn’t the oba-san back yet! I think it’s better if I go convince her!”

The agitated Sako-senpai immediately got the harisen treatment from Raika-san.

”Guwagh! What are you doing, Raika-kun!”

”Kaichou is getting in the way.”

”W- What nonsense are you spouting! If I just use my Secret Technique • Prostration to beg her……”

”It’s useless, things will take a turn for the worse if Sako-senpai appears. I’ll make this clear first, Sora-chan remembers what happened before this quite well.”

Sako-senpai, who called a fourteen year old girl an ‘oba-san’ and was unmoved even though a rare beauty like Raika-san is by his side, is really a man who engraved his lolicon behavioriron will into the depths of his very soul. His state could be said as a state of calmness for a man, but for Sora-chan who was deemed an ‘oba-san’, senpai is her undeniable enemy.

Even in this house, Sako-senpai's name had already become forbidden words.

"Hmph! Words of the people who already shed the supreme shell of a young girl and walk on the evil road of womanhood do not affect me no matter what."

Senpai does not care about it, but I really don't know how I would get scolded by Sora-chan after this.

What a headache.

No matter it's for Roary or for Raika-san, I really wish that Sora-chan would agree, but……

In reality, I cannot imagine Sora-chan agreeing to this at all.

Though it's somewhat pitiful, I don't think that Sora-chan, who was already harsh on me and Roary, but was extremely introverted before her classmates, and being said by Miu-chan to be bad at coping with males and having an uchibenkei personality, would easily agree to this.

"No."

Sora-chan's response was as I had expected.

Sora-chan, who brought Hina back home, didn't have any intention of hearing me out at all.

Disregarding the matter of convincing her, when I mentioned the matter about cosplay at the entrance while using *'I have something to discuss with you……'* as an opening, Sora-chan immediately gave me that answer. Saying that there's not even a chance would be an overstatement.

"Oi-tan, what's a cospway?"

"Hina, Nee-san…… No, didn't Mama sometimes wear clothes from animes?"

"Ah! Hina knows! Mama was cool!"

I see now. As expected of her daughter, Hina knows of it as well.

It seems like only I was in the dark.

It might be because she noticed my feelings, Miu-chan helped me out a bit.

"Well, well, Onee-chan. Since Oji-san didn't know of the cosplay matter at all, why don't you just consider it, okay?"

”Well, Miu, it’s because you look good no matter what you wear, and you like others to take pictures of you as well, so of course you’re fine with that. I feel uncomfortable even when people take notice of me!”

It’s actually quite reasonable that Sora-chan would be so angry.

”Hmm~mm…… That’s true.”

”And though the fact that Yuri-san did cosplay is a fact, I never did take part! I refused when Yuri-san asked me about it as well!”

It seemed like Sora-chan, who grumpily refused, had no intention to give in.

”Oi-tan~”

In the heavy atmosphere, Hina pulled at my sleeve.

”Hina is hungwy~ Nee-tan, Oi-tan, where’s dinner?”

T- That’s right! When I think about it, it was already quite late.

”A- Alright, let’s have dinner first. Dinner!”

While consoling Sora-chan, who still seemed rather unhappy, we walked towards the living room.

A galore of exquisite dishes was already placed there.

The dishes on the table looked as though they were carefully designed, and were dishes of the highest quality made by Raika-san. The main dish of dinner was stew added with chicken meat made for the ease of Hina’s consumption, and coupled with homemade roasted beef and other cold dishes, it seemed quite formal.

”Uwaa……. Awesome.”

Miu-chan’s eyes lit up, while Hina cheered.

”Gweat! Nee-tan, it’s gweat!”

”Mnn, mnn……”

Unable to conceal her shock after seeing the sudden scene before her eyes, Sora-chan’s gaze drifted in the air.

”Do you like it? My precious darlings.”

Raika-san stood in front of Sora-chan and the others and said with a red flush on her face.

Though the words that she spoke were rather affectionate, she still spoke without an expression on her face in a monotonous tone, as usual.

However, seeing her flushed appearance would make other people understand that she is trying hard to express her thoughts as well.

”Nee~-tan! All of them were made by Nee-tan~? Waa~ Gweat! Just like a cook!”

Hina said while repeatedly hitting Raika-san’s large breasts. Hina, remember to shake hands with Oi-tan before you wash your hands. While I was having wishful thinking about the contact, a voice pulled me back to reality.

”Can you people hurry up and get to your seats? I’ll start eating first if not.”

For some reason, Sako-senpai was sitting on the living room floor. Using a cardboard box in place of a dining table, he was eating meat in large mouthfuls. When I had a closer look, it seemed like tears were glimmering in senpai’s eyes as well.

”Wait a minute, why are you eating already! And why are you sitting on the floor?”

”Ha ha ha, Segawa-kun, you are so silly. There aren't enough chairs after all. Raika-kun said that it’s fine if my portion is just placed on the floor, so that’s why I thought that I should at least get a cardboard box…… *sob*…… *sob* *sob*……. Hmph! Even if it’s one second quicker…… I wish to finish it quickly! Urgh, just hurry up and eat already!”

Though I wasn’t sure about the situation, I just feel like treating Sako-senpai like this is a wise decision.

”Well, well, just ignore that person. Hina-chan, why don’t you sit here. Miu-chan, you too.”

”Ahh! It’s the cool onii-tan! Tank you~”

”Nimura-san, ufufu, since you’ve helped us already, thank you very much.”

The two younger sisters sat by the dining table with Nimura rather affectionately. Nimura didn’t even forget to praise Miu-chan’s hair when he was taking care of Hina with experience by spreading a napkin and pouring milk.

Well…… If you were to be a host at a night club, you probably would earn so much that you’ll be on TV.

”Hina-chan is always so cute…… Yuuta, it’s best if you give Hina-chan and the others to me.”

On the other hand, Raika-san who was looking at Hina with her face red suddenly made that worrisome declaration.

The people who had steamboat together before this gathered once more.

As for Sora-chan, her whole body radiated frightening waves of displeasure while she glared at me in indignation.

”Is there anything wrong, Sora-chan?”

”…… Nothing. I’m just thinking that I’m a far cry from Raika-san, who is both pretty and good at cooking.”

”Nonsense, Sora-chan is very cute.”

Raika-san earnestly interjected with a serious expression on her face, but that made Sora-chan’s head droop even more.

”Here, hurry up and eat.”

The observant Nimura led Sora-chan to the dining table, and we could finally start our dinner.

After trying the excellent taste of Raika-san’s homemade western dishes, everyone developed a very good appetite.

Only Sora-chan didn’t eat much…… Even so, she still managed to finish the portion for one person.

The only thing different from last time is that there isn’t so much conversation and laughter this time.

Though Sora-chan looked normal, her eyes were full of anger, while Sako-senpai did not notice it at all. The combination was really bad. Silence and tension filled the whole living room.

When the desserts were served, Sako-senpai spoke:

”Sora-kun, there’s something I would like to ask of you. In our school festival, can you join our co—“

”No.”

”Can you join our co—“

”No.”

”At least let me fini—“

”I refuse.”

Senpai’s attacks were all deflected.

”Segawa-kun…… What is with this situation?”

”I don’t know what to do as well.”

I was already refused, and am currently thinking of our next step.

”Sora-kun, you probably don’t dislike cosplay, right? Isn’t that true?”

”I dislike you.”

Sora-chan said curtly.

”Segawa-kun……”

”Senpai, stop complaining to me. Sora-chan, disregard senpai for the moment, can you help us out? You can just choose a character that you like.”

”No.”

Even Miu-chan couldn’t stand it anymore and chose that moment to help out.

”Oji-san already asked you so nicely, so why don’t you just help them out, Onee-chan?”

”That’s right, since Sora-chan is so cute, she’ll definitely be a huge hit.”

After that, Nimura continue the attack.

Even so, Sora-chan still refused to agree.

”I’ve decided to never do cosplay in my whole life.”

And got even more stubborn.

Her obstinacy might not be caused by embarrassment alone.

As senpai and the others were unable to look for an opening, and were silently thinking of a next plan……

”E~rm, Hina will do cospway! Oi-tan, Hina will do her best!”

Not knowing if Hina felt lonely or was unexpectedly good at observing the others, she broke the heavy atmosphere with her naïve, cute personality. Those were the words that the energetic three year old said.

Hina…… You're a really good girl, I'm almost going to cry.

"Ohh, Hina-sama's cosplay would be a supreme consolation for the people on eart…… Guwagh!"

As Sako-senpai was about to waste Hina's efforts with a bunch of nonsense, his forehead was first hit squarely by a harisen, while the person who threw it would naturally be Raika-san. Sako-senpai's head smashed right onto the plate that he just finished.

"Hina, thank you."

Raika-san and I stroked Hina's head, and that made Hina somewhat happy as well.

"Hina- Hina can do cospway! Nee~-tan! Nee-tan as well!"

Hina walked to the side of Sora-chan's legs after jumping down from her chair.

"Hina…… Onee-chan doesn't like it so much…… Understand?"

Sora-chan didn't even look at Hina's face when she spoke.

So it's still impossible in the end huh…… If she dislikes it so much…… I actually don't want to force her.

"You~ are~ lying~ Hina knows!"

However, Hina's cheery voice dispersed the heavy atmosphere by Sora-chan's side.

"Hina wants to do cospway with Nee-tan!"

It seemed like Hina connected her sentence with a shout.

After that, she ran out of the living room quickly.

"Ah, Hina!"

"Let me do the honors."

Raika-san gave chase to Hina. Oh well, since they're in the house anyway, so there shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Though it was somewhat mystifying, Hina's actions still broke the heavy atmosphere.

Sora-chan looked at Hina's leaving silhouette with her eyes widened.

We heard the sounds of Hina and Raika-san walking upstairs at first, and then there were sounds of rummaging, and after awhile—

We started to hear a song.

"Bunny~ bunny~ bounce~ bounce~ ♪"

"Bounce bounce."

Hina's cute singing voice caused the tension just now to evaporate completely.

While the person who was singing along would naturally be Raika-san.

"Bunny, bunny~ ♪"

"Bunny, bunny."

"Bounce, bounce~ ♪"

"Bounce, bounce."

What appeared before our eyes along with the song that lacked tension would be the aforementioned bunny.

"Hina, why are you dressed up like that?"

"Ehehe~ Aren't~ I~ cute~?"

Hina was wearing a bunny costume for children.

From the light, fluffy bunny costume, only Hina's face could be seen.

I really never thought that such a thing could exist in our house.

If it were to be much earlier, I might have been more surprised, but now that I've accidentally known about Nee-san's interest, I'm starting to feel that it's not strange even if such a thing is here. Probably.

However, Sora-chan responded with much shock for some reason.

"Hina! That is……"

"Eh~ Mama made it for Hina~ There's one for Nee-tan two~ Hina knows!"

”If so…… Is it possible……!?”

Sora-chan covered her mouth with her hands in shock.

”Wh- Where did you find it!?”

”At the innermost side of a wardrobe.”

That was how Raika-san answered.

”Wardrobe…… Ah!”

Sora-chan suddenly dashed out of the living room.

Naturally, we immediately followed her.

Sora-chan ran into the ‘room that couldn’t be opened’.

It seems like Sora-chan unlocked the room when she confirmed if the room was entered or not, and forgot to relock it after that. That was why Hina could enter the room.

Though the room was somewhat messy, it was probably due to Hina and Raika-san searching in the room before this. An astounding amount of clothes was piled up on the floor.

The door of the large wardrobe further in the room was already open, while Sora-chan was standing right in front of it.

”…… Sora-chan?”

”So…… It was already done……”

Sora-chan unblinkingly stared at the clothes in the wardrobe and said blankly.

Inside, there were two cosplay clothes placed together.

”Sora-chan, this is……”

From the size, most probably it is one made especially for Sora-chan.

While the one by its side…… Would probably be Nee-san’s.

Though the design was similar, there were still some slight differences.

”Yuri-san promised me that she would bring me to a convention to do cosplay when I’m fifteen. Though I refused her…… Yuri-san said that she already told her friends that she would attend with her daughter…… Because Yuri-san refused to give in, I.....”

Sora-chan suddenly spoke.

”But I understand as well, Yuri-san was just worried that I would be too introverted…… That was why she chose a co-ed middle school for me, and asked me to do cosplay…… It was all for my sake…….”

Sora-chan kept saying in a low voice.

”But I felt embarrassed. Because…… I am not as beautiful as Yuri-san.”

These are probably precious memories between Sora-chan and Nee-san.

”That time…… Yuri-san handed this to me, saying that it’s a part of the clothes. She said that it looks good on me, saying that I would definitely be able to muster the courage. Though I’m already embarrassed when I’m wearing this……”

Sora-chan said while pointing at the silk ribbons adorning her hair.

From what Sora-chan said, the silk ribbons and the clothes should probably be in a set.

”Yuri-san probably wanted to hide this until my birthday. Since she hid it so well, I might never have found it.

The two sets of clothing placed together looked just like a mother and a daughter.

No, because this *is* the proof that they are mother and daughter.

Though Nee-san couldn’t hand the clothes to Sora-chan herself, Sora-chan still found out about it now. When I think about it, it’s like even Sako-senpai’s stubbornness was arranged by Nee-san. And I finally understood why Sora-chan was so unwilling to help out by doing cosplay all along.

”Sora-chan, why don’t you try it on?”

”Eh……”

Sora-chan looked back at me in surprise.

The reason that I said so because I think that it’s something that Sora-chan would do naturally.

”Though it’s still some time before your fifteenth birthday, I think Nee-chan will definitely be very happy.”

Miu-chan, Hina, Nimura and Raika-san all nodded silently.

It's so fortunate that Sako-senpai is unconscious at this moment.

Sora-chan looked at us with her face red, and then—

"…… 'Kay!"

Sora-chan smiled and nodded.

We waited in anticipation during the period of time when Sora-chan returned to her room to change.

Of course, the set of clothes fitted Sora-chan extremely well.

The shy expression on Sora-chan's face when she makes a pose charmed everyone.

"So cute. Yuuta, give her to me. I will treasure her very much."

As Raika-san looked like she wanted to keep Sora-chan for herself, I hurriedly grabbed Sora-chan's hand and snatched her back.

"No, not giving you."

"W- Wait a minute, Onii-chan!"

Sora-chan flushed because of my actions, but I ignored that.

Though the slender body that I was hugging was still quite small, not having the volume when hugging Raika-san, she is still an important girl that I have to support with all my efforts.

"Oi-tan! Hina wants it two!"

Hey! Hina, don't climb on me.

It seemed like Hina planned to ride on my shoulders forcibly.

Fine then, come on!

Carrying Hina on my shoulders with my left arm around Sora-chan's shoulders, I waved at Miu-chan.

"Miu-chan, why don't you come over as well?"

”…… Mnn~nn. I’ll pass, there’s no camera now anyway.”

Miu-chan laughed softly after saying that.

”However…… Does this mean that you agree to the cosplay now, Onee-chan?”

After Miu-chan said that, Sora-chan turned around to look at me. Meeting Sora-chan’s gaze at a close distance made me smile.

Mnn? Isn’t Sora-chan’s face…… a bit too red? Is it because of flu……

I couldn’t help but start worrying.

”Sora-chan……”

”S- Seriously…… C- Can’t be helped, then. A- After all, the clothes that Yuri-san made me……. Can’t be wasted like this, and I can’t go to a convention with Onii-chan as well……”

Sora-chan’s mumblings would mean that she already agreed to us.

Raika-san gave me the thumbs up.

”Good job, Yuuta. Anticipate what I’ve promised you that day.”

After hearing Raika-san say that expressionlessly, Sora-chan, whose face was originally red, trembled for a moment.

”Onii-chan…… What does that mean?”

”Whooooooaaaaa! Where is Miu-sama and Hina-sama’s cosplay!”

Sako-senpai chose that terrible moment to awaken.

”…… I’ve changed my mind, since I already wore it today.”

”N- No, Sora-chan~”

Consoling Sora-chan’s bad mood gave me a huge headache after that.

Though it was already late night, since the school festival was soon approaching, the Hachiouji team returned to the college…… As for us, it was as though we were in the grace period after a hurricane.

”Alright, we’re going in.”

Hina and I were happily bathing in the bathtub.

”Splash! Ahahaha!”

Seeing the hot water splash out of the bathtub made Hina rather happy.

Though I don’t dislike a small bathroom, large ones are indeed better.

After all, it’s only like this that Hina and I can have the space to go in the bathtub together.

”Hina, you’ll have to soak your shoulders as well.”

”Okay~”

Hina obediently soaked her body into the water, and then her whole body sank.

”Stop playing, I said till your shoulders.”

”Puhaa! Oi-tan, come pway too!”

”No, I’d rather not today.”

Actually, I have something to mull over today.

”Eh~ Why?”

”If you soak for too long, gills will grow near your throat.”

”Giws?”

”That’s right. Aren’t there holes by a fish’s eyes? Those are gills.”

”Mnn~ Is gwowing giws bad?”

”Of course it’s bad. Think about it, things will fall out of it when you eat.”

”Uwaa! That’s bad! Oi-tan, let’s go out quick!”

Whoops, it seems like it’s too large of a bluff.

”Relax, Oi-tan knows a useful magic spell.”

”A magic spell?”

”That’s right. First, you have to soak your shoulders into the water and count till a hundred. You won’t grow gills if you do this when you bathe.”

”Okay!”

Luckily, Hina is an obedient child.

And it looks like I successfully made Hina develop the habit of counting to a hundred when bathing as well.

”One~ Two~ Twee~ Four~ Five~……”

While listening to the comfortable rhythm of Hina counting, I fuzzily pondered about something.

About cosplay, the school festival, and what comes after that.

Though Sora-chan still agreed in the end, however……

I was actually completely clueless about Nee-san’s hobbies.

I even stayed together with her for so long now.

Miu-chan and Sora-chan probably know a lot more than me.

Would Hina, who would laugh and be scared of my nonsense right now, have things that she is unwilling for me to know, or say things like not willing to wash her clothes along with my underwear?

Speaking of which, the times of bathing together probably wouldn’t last long.

Uuu…… Even thinking of it gave me a blow.

”Will Hina stay Hina forever for Oi-tan?”

”…… Hmm?”

Hina looked at me in confusion.

After bathing, I have to dry Hina’s hair.

Since Hina’s hair is as long as Miu-chan’s, and there is a lot of it, the job is quite a long one.

”Uwaa~! Hot~”

”Hey! Hina, don’t move.”

To avoid Hina from getting a cold, I used the hair dryer to carefully dry Hina’s hair from the roots.

Having to take care of a girl's hair like this makes me think that being a girl is really quite tough.

Just the hair would take such an effort when little, so it'll be even worse when they're older.

I couldn't stand it even when I imagine it.

"Oi-tan, Hina is thiwsty~"

"Wait a moment more…… Okay, that's about it. That's fine."

"Uwaa~"

Hina immediately rushed out of the bathroom.

On the other hand, after I sloppily dried my hair and changed into my cotton shirt used as pajamas, I walked out after Hina.

In the living room, there were Sora-chan who looked somewhat exhausted, and Miu-chan whose face was full of smiles.

"Hina is already done, so you two better go as well."

"……. Mnn."

Sora-chan, who already took of her cosplay clothes, seemed somewhat down.

"…… What is it?"

"Mnn~ I'm just a bit tired. I think I won't take a bath today and just sleep."

Is that so. It's really hard on Sora-chan. And her face still seems red as well……

"Though she said that, she's actually wishing not to forget the touch while she was embraced……"

Miu-chan said some incomprehensible words.

"…… Miu!"

Sora-chan shouted while raising her fist. Though I wasn't too sure of what they meant, Sora-chan's face was indeed quite red.

"Sora-chan, why don't you take some cold medicine before sleeping? After all, the school festival is on the day after tomorrow."

I couldn't help but start worrying. Did I tire Sora-chan too much?

However, Sora-chan and Miu-chan both looked at me with a look of surprise on their faces…… And then they sighed.

”…… Thank you, but I’m fine…… Good night.”

”Mnn, good night.”

”Hina too! Hina wants to sleep two! Today…… Hina wants to sleep with Oi-tan!”

Hina is such a good girl. I stroked Hina’s head.

”Then we’ll go to sleep as well. Miu, hurry up and take a bath.”

”…… Fine~ Sigh~ Tough luck, Onee-chan.”

After saying yet another incomprehensible sentence, she walked towards the bathroom.

…… What were they talking about? Girls have quite a lot of secrets. After I thought of that, I sighed in the living room and turned off the lights.

”Onii-chan! Wake up!”

I was woke up by Sora-chan’s loud voice.

”Uuu…… What time is it……?”

”It’s seven. I made breakfast already, hurry up and eat.”

”Oh, mnn……”

I noticed that Miu-chan and the others were already by the dining table when I arrived at the living room.

”Good morning, Oji-san. It’s awesome today as well. Your hair.”

”Eh…… Is that so?”

”Oi-tan, afwo hair! Afwo hair!”

Whoops, I should’ve gone to the washroom first.

”Fine, fine, hurry up and sit down. Breakfast is ready now.”

”Err…… But I want to comb my hair first……”

”Deal with it after this!”

In the end, I ate breakfast in the state of having an afro.

”That’s right, thank you for yesterday. Things happened so suddenly.”

”It’s okay, things have already been decided anyways.”

Recently, Sora-chan’s efforts already helped me out a lot, so now that I have to trouble Sora-chan even with the matters of the school festival, I’m really quite sorry for this, to be honest. Even so, the problem is almost completely solved thanks to Nee-san’s clothes.

Thinking of that made me thank Nee-san in my heart as well.

”That’s right, Onii-chan. Here’s your bento.”

Sora-chan handed me a large package.

”Onii-chan, you’re going to prepare for your school festival today, right? I made a lot, so share them with your friends.”

”Why did you think of doing this?”

”Because Raika-san made dinner for us yesterday, so….. This is a gift in return, and includes the portion for Nimura-san and the others as well.”

Sora-chan said in slight embarrassment.

”Though they’re just frozen food and onigiris, I’ve tried them all!”

…… Indeed, Sora-chan is quite hardworking in this aspect. Unknowingly, her cooking skills improved a lot.

However…… She looked so exhausted yesterday, how worrisome……

As I was about to tell Sora-chan not to force herself……

”Nee-chan, there seems to be an odd smell coming from somewhere.”

”Eh…… Ahhh!”

After Miu-chan said that, Sora-chan hurriedly ran towards the stove.

”Ahh…… I messed up.”

A few completely charred fishes laid on the grill.

It seems like Sora-chan's cooking still needs improvement.

Because of that, I took back the words that I was about to say.

Thinking back after that, I really regret my choice that time.

After sending Hina to the kindergarten, Sora went to her school as well.

Recently, Sora shouldered all the housework because of Yuuta's business, so she was somewhat deprived of sleep. In reality, she would always feel sleepy at school.

And because so many things happened yesterday, I really couldn't sleep…… So that's why I woke up to make bento.

It's all because Onii-chan did something like that…… Just thinking of that made Sora's cheeks burn.

However, the school festival is soon approaching.

Will the time for me to be together with Onii-chan increase after the school festival ends…… While thinking of that, Sora-chan read cookbooks alone in her class, trying to increase her cooking skills.

"Takanashi-san, can I have a moment?"

The person who said that would be Tani Shuuji.

Though he is in the same class and club as Sora, he always gives the others the impression of always staying behind Daiki, and doesn't usually stay in the spotlight.

"Err…… Is there anything wrong?"

Sora said somewhat nervously.

It seems like although Shuuji was somewhat favorable among the girls, he is still a male that she is bad at coping with.

"It's about Daiki…… The fellow is acting strange lately. Do you know what is causing this?"

The completely clueless Sora shook her head.

"Is that so…… Sorry for asking you such a strange question."

After saying that, Shuuji left from Sora's seat.

Speaking of which, Daiki still has not come to school yet today.

Usually, Daiki would make trouble by saying *'Come back to the Choir Club!'* whenever he arrives, causing a huge hubbub…… But no matter what Daiki said, Sora did not have any intention of going back to the Choir Club.

Of course, it's not because Sora dislikes the Choir Club.

It's just that, to Sora right now, compared with the choir, or even anything else, there is something that she should give more priority to.

"Will this make Onii-chan happy……"

While sticking labels on the cookbook, Sora said happily.

After sending Sora-chan and the others out, I walked out not long after that as well.

Tomorrow will be the big day, so we'd probably need to be very busy because of the preparations.

Thinking of this, it's really thankful that Sora-chan made me a bento.

After I locked the entrance door and was about to set out, I noticed a familiar face standing at the entrance.

"Ehh…… You are……"

I remember that he's one of Sora-chan's classmates, and…… His surname seems to be Maeshima or something like that.

"Is there anything wrong? If you're looking for Sora-chan, she's already at school."

"No. I'm here to look for you."

Maeshima-kun said with a fierce expression on his face.

"Me……?"

"What do you think of Sora?"

"How do I…… Wait a minute, I don't understand what you mean."

"Stop faking it!"

Maeshima-kun suddenly grabbed my collar.

My collar was grabbed by a middle schooler, and I was pressed on the entrance door.

”Takanashi, she- she is……!”

”M- Maeshima-kun……?”

I’m really confused.

Even so, I could understand that he is angry at me.

”It’s all your fault!”

”Eh……”

”It’s all because of you that she can’t come back to the Choir Club!”

”Because of…… me?”

”Damn!”

Maeshima-kun pushed me away and ran off.

As for me, I stood in front of the entrance, blankly watching him leave.

”What is with this……?”

How puzzling. But he’s still Sora-chan’s classmate, and worries for Sora-chan from the bottom of his heart.

At least that is right.

Then as he said, is it my fault that Sora-chan cannot return to ther club?

”Yuuta-san, what are you doing here?”

Oba-san was standing at my side from goodness knows when, looking at me, whose face was full of confusion.

Chapter 5 - School Festival and The First Time

”Please have some tea.”

Seeing me serve her some tea, Oba-san thanked me and sipped some tea with slow movements.

After awhile, Oba-san spoke:

”And the boy just now is……?”

”Ah…… Err, he’s Sora-chan’s friend.”

It seems like Oba-san saw it all.

As it was useless to hide it, I decided to answer honestly.

”I’m not sure about what he means as well, so most of this is my own assumptions…… He seems to think that it’s because of me that Sora-chan can’t return to her club.”

”Is that so……”

After saying that, Oba-san sipped some more tea.

”In any case, let’s not talk about that today.”

As usually, Oba-san still handles things so clearly.

”Today, I am here to check on the condition of your house.”

When she finished, Oba-san glanced in the direction of the kitchen.

No matter how you look at it, it’s hard to say that the kitchen is in a clean state.

The chopping board clearly displayed, unwashed cutlery in the sink, while a large pot containing too much miso soup was still on the gas stove.

”Sorry, I should be in charge of clearing away the cutlery."

I gave her a small lie.

However, I still planned to wash it after this anyways.

”Who made the food?”

”Sora-chan is making them recently. Currently, I’m somewhat busy as I have to prepare for a school festival for my college, so Sora-chan volunteered to do the housework.”

”Ah, I see……”

Oba-san’s silence scares me every time.

As Oba-san is in charge of checking on our living conditions for the relatives, she would visit our house a few times each month and sternly point out any mistakes.

”You’ll have to consider the amount of food next time. Even though it is winter, making too much will spoil before you can finish them.”

”Okay…… I will take note of it.”

”You need to take a larger role in the cleaning and washing.”

”Yes.”

Judging from Oba-san’s reaction, it seems like we managed to pass somehow.

”Your living conditions are barely adequate, but I have another matter to speak of today……”

After saying that, Oba-san took out a piece of paper from her handbag and placed it before me.

It was a faxed paper that Sora-chan’s class teacher sent. In law, Sora-chan’s official guardian is Nii-san’s elder brother, while the documents that are sent to him would be passed on to Oba-san. From the contents of the paper, it seems like Sora-can often dozed off in class recently.

The school wouldn’t usually inform the guardians about a matter of this extent, but since Sora-chan only faced a large change in her environment recently after all, and added with the fact that she is a serious, dutiful student, the teachers are more concerned about Sora-chan than the other students.

Speaking of which, dozing off, huh…… Is it possible that Sora-chan couldn’t sleep well at all?

Recently, Sora-chan even helped out with making bento, so it might have been too hard on her.

”Yuuta-san, you have to be more aware of these things.”

”I understand.”

After finishing her explanation, Oba-san left very quickly.

After that, I headed to my college after clearing away the unwashed cutlery.

After the school festival ends, I’ll let Sora-chan rest properly for awhile.

And I'll have to talk things out with Sora-chan about the matter of the child called Maeshima coming over to our house, and about the Choir Club.

And after that, I'll have to consider more about the distribution of housework to reduce Sora-chan's burden.

I'll have to wait until the school festival ends before I can sort out the myriad of matters.

Just like that, I tossed all of the problems to the back of my mind.

A thick shroud of smoke and fragrance enveloped us in happiness.

"I'll take the piece of meat then!"

Nimura nimbly took away a piece of meat that was grilled just right from the wire gauze.

"Ah! Why you! I was the one who grilled that!"

At the same time that I cried out in protest, Nimura popped the last piece of meat into his mouth as well.

On the day before the school festival, Sako-senpai suddenly treated us to roasted meat for some reason.

Of course, the three sisters were invited as well.

Though activities are held on the previous night of the school festival, the café of Roary opens only tomorrow, so it's unrelated to us.

Perhaps it's a reward that senpai gave us beforehand, but of course, it might be because he wants to eat it as well.

"Kaichou, more meat."

"Oda-kun, aren't you eating a bit too much since I'm treating? Please be more polite!"

"Say, Sako-san. Miu wants to have more meat as well~"

"Waiter! Roasted meat for three! Quick!"

"Hina, is the roasted meat tasty?"

"Yes!"

”There are desserts here as well. There’s mocha, lychee, and vanilla. Since Sako-senpai is treating anyways, let’s just order what we want. Have you eaten almond tofu before, Hina?”

”Segawa-kun, why are even you doing this!”

”Ah~ Miu wants ice cream as well~”

”Waiter! Ice cream! Get me some of every flavor!”

Since it’s been a while since we had yakiniku, and added with the fact that it’s the anticipated school festival tomorrow, it made all of our spirits run high.

”Sora-chan, did you have some?”

”Yes, I did. Anything wrong?”

”Err……”

Oba-san’s words made me worry a little, but seeing Sora-chan’s appetite made me think that I might have thought too much. But still, her face was rather red……

”Kaichou, I want cold noodles.”

”Ah, I’ll have Bibimbap then.”

”Oxtail soup.”

”Y- You all……”

Nimura, Raika-san and I started to order in turn.

”I’ll have hone-tsuki-karubi [1] with rice.”

”Same as Onee-chan’s.”

”Hina wants…… Mnn~ Erm~ Hanburg steak!”

”Fuha…… Fuhahahahahaha! Come! Order whatever you want!”

In the end, Sako-senpai shouted in abandonment.

After leaving the yakiniku shop, the sisters and I headed towards Nimura’s place.

On the other hand, Raika-san and Sako-senpai returned to their houses as they lived nearby.

All of us were gorged, and it felt like we ate half a year's worth of meat.

In contrast, seeing Sako-senpai take out a large wad of ten thousand yens at the counter really makes people feel somewhat sympathetic.

Our plan was to stay overnight at Nimura's place, and finish the settings of the classroom tomorrow morning.

Thinking of that, it felt somewhat astounding that we actually could do things till such an extent in such a short time.

Plus, even Sora-chan and the others joined us.

Of course, we had the cosplay costumes by our sides as well.

"Here, welcome, welcome."

As soon as we arrived at the doorstep, Nimura welcomed the girls into the house.

As usual, even Nimura's small actions were unnecessarily good looking.

"Wow! It's so nostalgic!"

Miu-chan exclaimed after looking around the room.

"Isn't saying that it's nostalgic somewhat…… It's not even been two months since we left this place."

Sora-chan corrected her. She's right.

As Nimura changed the decorations somewhat, and because we were really busy, it made us feel that everything was nostalgic that moment.

"Segawa-chan, are you fine with coffee?"

"Anything would do."

Not long after that, coffee, red tea and hot milk with hot steam wafting from them were placed before us. Nimura skillfully added honey into the girls' cups.

"How is it? What do you think after returning to this house after some time?"

"Uuu~ Small."

Miu-chan said directly.

”I really can’t imagine that the four of us could actually live here.”

”Yeah.”

Indeed, it was as they have said.

Though the occupant changed from me to Nimura, and the furnishing of the room changed completely, the size and partitions of the apartment did not change at all.

Although this has changed into a trendy, clean space, it was still a place that we lived at a month ago.

”Ah! Nimura-san, you’re wearing glasses.”

Miu-chan said to Nimura who was holding his own cup while sitting on the floor.

If so, does that mean that he usually wears contact lenses?

”How is it? Do I look more intellectual when I’m wearing glasses?”

”Yes, yes! You look very cool!”

Not for Sale or Rent

Miu-chan's reaction was somewhat excited. Well…… It's a reaction that has no chance of happening on me……

Uuu…… That made me slightly unhappy.

"Sora-chan, what do you think?"

"……"

"Oi~ Sora-chan."

"Eh? Ah, erm…… I think that it looks rather nice."

Wait a minute, did Sora-chan look at it so much that she went in a trance?

I'm really unhappy.

"Hina~ Come here! Compared with the posturing specky, Hina thinks that Oi-tan is better, right?"

"Uuu~……"

Oh well, it seems like it's already time for Hina to go to bed.

"Hey, Hina, remember to brush your teeth before you sleep."

"'Kay~……"

Sora-chan brought the unsteady Hina into the washroom.

That time, even a scene like that was nostalgic.

"Well, Segawa-chan, what are your plans for tomorrow?"

"…… What plans are you referring to?"

"You're still so slow, huh. It's the school festival tomorrow, right? There are activities, right? I'm asking you, who are you going to ask out? We probably won't stay in the café to work all the time, as it's our first festival after all."

"Err…… No, I haven't……"

"Ah! I want to know as well."

Miu-chan added after Nimura finished.

”Speaking plainly, I’m asking you if you want to ask Oda-senpai out.”

”Uuu……”

That hit a sore spot.

To be frank, I did think of asking her out, but I really couldn’t muster the courage when I think that I might get refused.

”In my view, I would recommend Oji-san to ask Onee-chan out.”

”Ask Sora-chan……?”

Sora-chan was coincidentally in the washroom, absent for the moment.

Miu-chan probably took the opportunity to mention about this.

”How is it? Oji-san, do you want to pick Onee-chan, or Raika-san?”

”Segawa-chan, who do you want to ask out?”

The two pressed me like highly coordinated partners.

”I- It’s not the problem of who I want to ask out…… A thing like this……”

”It isn’t good to be so indecisive.”

”Yeah, just like video games, you’ll have to choose one of them when options pop out at a critical moment. If you don’t choose any, both of their goodwill degree will drop.”

”W- What are you talking about?!”

With a smile on their faces, they slowly advanced.

”What are you doing?”

With perfect timing, Sora-chan and Hina returned to the living room.

”Okay! This matter ends here! We’ll have to wake up early tomorrow, so sleep, sleep!”

”He made it through, somehow……”

Nimura, I’ll remember you for this. While vowing in my heart to take revenge in the near future, I spread out the mattress that I am going to sleep in that night.

”Can I take a bath first?”

”Sure, Hina almost can’t hold on anymore, so I’ll take a bath after she sleeps.”

That moment, Hina was like a puppet with its strings cut, and nodded her head repeatedly.

”Then I’ll go first~”

Just at that moment, Miu-chan stopped as she was about to walk into the bathroom, turning around to look at Nimura and I.

”And what are you two still doing here?”

”What do you mean?”

Both Nimura and I were in confusion, not comprehending what Miu-chan meant at all.

”I’m going to take a bath, so will the men please get out!”

In the end, the both of us were chased out of the apartment, just like in the past.

When the day of the school festival finally arrived, there were magnificent decorations and a myriad of student stalls at the school entrance. The complex designs and clothing that showed off the specialties of the clubs and societies in the school could be seen everywhere in the campus.

We, the Roary, moved the equipments and ingredients into the school early in the morning as well.

Even so, we almost didn’t do anything at all. In truth, it was as usual, four gas stoves, espresso machines, the fridge, coffee beans and other ingredients were set up in the classroom in a flash by a few people who seemed to be strong men that Sako-senpai arranged for.

”Good morning, Sako-senpai!”

”Mnn, thanks for your hard work.”

A few men about two heads taller than Sako-senpai gradually left after greeting him.

I’m really curious about Sako-senpai’s relationship with those men, but I don’t really feel like knowing too much at the same time……

”Well, let us change as well.”

”Okay.”

After the hard work ended, it was Nimura and my turn.

This is the time for the results of our special training at Hiromi-chan's place to be brought into play.

And actually, Hiromi-chan really took care of us.

Facing my clumsy coffee making skills and Nimura's flirting in the name of greeting customers, not only did Hiromi-chan not get angry or complain, he even taught us cordially and attentively, paying us wages for working for him as well.

Thinking of myself feeling that he's disgusting the first time I met him made me feel rather ashamed.

If it were to be now, I can even face his actions of liking to touch other people's body with a smile as well.

"Segawa-kun! Nimura-kun!"

While thinking of that, he suddenly appeared before our eyes.

"Hiromi-chan, why are you……?"

"Well, I miss you two, so…… I just came here somehow."

Somehow…… Can you stop acting like you're shy with your hands? It's horrifying.

"Oh! It's Hiromi-chan, huh. You're here as well?"

"Shun-chan, I'm here to help out!"

The two went into a tight embrace the moment that they saw each other.

It really looked nauseating. Okay, I take back what I thought in my heart. I still can't stand him.

"What is……"

Sora-chan looked at the two in confusion.

"Oh~ Theses girls are so cute."

Hiromi-chan noticed the three sisters.

"T- They're my nieces!"

To avoid Hina and the others from being scared by Hiromi-chan's unique style, I hastily dashed between them.

”U, ugu…… Guwaaaaaaaaaaa!”

But it was too late. Hina wailed as though she was on fire.

”Oh my! I wonder what’s wrong~ Oh- Don’t cry, don’t cry.”

Though he looked like that, Hiromi-chan has the heart of a kind, pure maiden.

When he saw Hina crying, Hiromi-chan immediately tried to comfort Hina.

”Muwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! Onee-taaaaaaaaaaaaan!”

Probably because the close-up shot of Hiromi was too frightening, Hina started to cry even louder.

”Oh my, what’s the matter?”

Hiromi-chan, who did not realize that it was all because of his appearance, was flustered for quite some time. Sigh…… I really feel somewhat bad about this. That moment, I thought of the matter of Miu-chan and the others getting snatched away by Nimura yesterday night.

That made me vow in my heart to teach Hina the fact of ‘Don’t judge a book by its cover, the inside is more important’.

After that, the moment arrived.

The broadcast signifying the start of the school festival rang in the school, and noise rang in the whole campus.

There were shouts of students, visitors from outside, people who just wanted to show off in the hubbub. In the flow of all kinds of people, a lively atmosphere filled Tama Literary College like never before.

Customers arrived immediately at the café that our Roary started as well.

The first customers to arrive were two young ladies.

”Oh my~ Welcome~”

Just like that, Hiromi-chan greeted them before anyone else.

”Kyaaaaaa!”

The ladies screamed and ran away, end of story. Our first customers ran away just like that, while the process only took a few seconds.

”Wait a minute, Hiromi-chan! Didn’t we tell you not to come out from inside!”

”I’m sorry, I habitually……”

”Leave it for later, Hiromi-chan. Hurry up and go there!”

I pushed Hiromi-chan from the back, chasing him inside.

”Oh my! You really are rough…… However, a personality like this, I…… Ohoho.”

Can you please stop doing this?

The following customers were females as well.

So that we would succeed, we asked Nimura to stand at the front door.

”Welcome.”

As we had expected, Nimura quickly led the female customers to their seats.

The harsh training that Nimura went through in Hiromi-chan’s shop seemed to have worked.

And it might just be because of Nimura’s good looking appearance, the two customers stared at Nimura in a daze, ordering in accordance to Nimura’s recommendations.

”Segawa-chan, two red teas, chiffon cake and cheese cake.”

”Okay, got it.”

Nimura was like a duck to water, and also……

”Uwaaa! I- It’s good! What’s with this red tea!”

”The cake is super tasty as well! Wow!? Is this club the Gourmet Club?”

The customers’ limbs shook in excitement.

Hiromi-chan gave me a wink that almost made an obvious sound effect at the temporary kitchen.

As expected of Hiromi-chan, he really is a professional, while Nimura’s gigolo treatment wasn’t bad as well.

After the two customers left, not long after that, many customers gradually arrived, probably because the word spread.

When the matter turned out like that, it was somewhat hard for Nimura to do things alone.

”Has Raika-san finished preparations yet? And why is Sora-chan missing as well?”

Speaking of which, I didn’t seem to see either of them after preparations were finished.

”Is there anything wrong?”

Right at that moment, Miu-chan ran over to ask about the situation.

”Have you seen Raika-san and the others? We almost can’t handle things anymore.”

”Oh, Raika-san will be here very quic…...”

At that moment, an obvious exclamation came from the corridors.

As I was wondering about the situation, the exclamations gradually came closer.

And the reason for the screams…… Or I should say, the identity of the person, arrived before me very quickly.

”Sorry for the wait.”

It was Raika-san.

But the clothes that she was wearing were not the plain student attire that she usually wears, but what they call as a bunny costume. And she was definitely the most awesome bunny girl with huge breasts in the whole universe.

”R- Raika-san……”

I understand now. I finally understood the reason for the screams just now. She probably wore the provocative, or I should say lethal costume, walking from the dressing room to this place.

”How is it?”

Raika-san asked in a cool manner as usual.

”Ah! Err…… You look…… good.”

Giving a huge effort, I forced out those few words.

However, Raika-san seemed to be unsatisfied with my reaction, and deliberately lifted her ample bosoms before me.

”Look, these are the huge breasts that you want so much, Or will only cat ears do the job?”

Raika-san…… Can you please be more conscious of the fact that you’re a striking beauty?

Instead of saying that I got a great deal, such a development was more like I was treated like a fool.

”Meow, meow, how is this?”

”Guwaa……”

Wearing a bunny girl costume, Raika-san raised her hands to her ears and posed as a cat.

How can this be! This is just plain cheating! I’m almost having a nosebleed!

”Oi~ Segawa-cha~n. Please ask Oda-senpai to serve the customers~”

Nimura couldn’t help but complain.

”Okay, time for reward ends now.”

The striking bunny girl started to serve the customers, not concealing her bobbing breast.

Uuu~ Thinking that other men could see senpai’s attire really made me unhappy.

It’s a reward that I got for trying hard to convince my cute nieces……

”…… Onii-chan is an idiot.”

”Uwaa!?”

Suddenly feeling waves of anger nearby, I hurriedly turned around to take a look.

As Raika-san’s appearance caused me to fall into a daze, I did not notice at all that from god knows when, Sora-chan was already standing by my side, wearing her cosplay costume and a grumpy expression.

Seeing Sora-chan’s look away with her angry expression really made me feel bad.

”S- Sora-chan……”

”Hmph! I’m not a beauty like Raika-san anyways, and my breasts aren’t large……”

It seems like I completely angered Sora-chan.

I hurriedly waved my hands while explaining:

”H- How can you say that! Sora-chan is very cute as well!”

Though I didn’t notice for a moment because of the large-breasted bunny girl assault, as expected of Nee-san’s specially made clothes, the costume on Sora-chan looked really good.

It was totally a costume made just for Sora-chan.

I'm not too familiar with anime, so I wasn’t too sure what anime it came from, but the character that Nee-san chose probably brought out Sora-chan’s personal charm completely. Not exposing too much, I believe the introverted Sora-chan wouldn’t be too pressured while wearing it, and a male guardian like me or Shingo-san can let Sora-chan wear the costume without worrying too much as well.

To be honest, if Sora-chan wants to wear a bunny costume, I probably would have stopped her.

Wishing to see Raika-san in a bunny costume, but un-willing for Sora-chan to do it, what contradictory thoughts I have.

Does this count as me starting to think as a parent?

”But……”

That moment, Sora-chan lowered her head in a lack of confidence.

”No, there’s no such thing. Sora-chan, you look great in that.”

”…… Really?”

”I’m a person that doesn’t know how to lie from the start.”

”…… Ehehe~”

Though she was a bit shy, a smile appeared on Sora-chan’s face as well.

Mnn, for an expression like this, Sora-chan isn’t inferior at all when compared to Raika-san.

While Hina started to protest at the side as well.

”Oi-tan! What about Hina? What about Hina!”

”Ohh! Hina is very cute as well!”

Hina was wearing the bunny costume that she wore last time.

Accompanied with the innocence of a three year old, the cuteness of the costume was tremendous.

”Okay, Hina. Both you and Sora-chan stand at the entrance, showing off all of your cuteness.”

”Roger! Let’s go! Nee-tan!”

After saluting me, Hina grabbed Sora-chan’s hands, dragging the hesitating Sora-chan to the entrance.

We’ll probably be extremely busy now.

”Ahh! Okay, okay. It’s about time for me to change as well.”

Miu-chan said at a side. As she was helping Nimura out, she hasn't had a chance to change yet.

”Wait a minute! Miu-sama, please wait for a moment!”

Sako-senpai, who disappeared during the period of time, suddenly reappeared.

And the way senpai appeared was like he suddenly appeared out of thin air.

”Senpai, where on earth did you run off to? We’re really busy over here!”

”Okay! Please look over here!”

Sako-senpai completely ignored my words.

He just used his new digital camera to take photos of Miu-chan non-stop.

”Would that be fine?”

”Good! Excellent! Miu-sama is the best!”

Are you a photographer?

"Err~ I still haven’t changed yet.”

Though that was what Miu-chan said, she still started to pose professionally.

I really don’t know whether to say that she’s experienced or what…… Miu-chan did not have Sora-chan’s shyness at all, fully expressing a commanding presence, so people would probably believe it if others say that she’s an idol taking pictures for a photo album.

”Okay! Thank you! Please change into the next set of clothes!”

After saying that, Sako-senpai took out a huge bag.

A huge assortment of cosplay clothes was filled in the bag.

”All of these suits Miu-sama! Please choose whichever you like!”

…… Senpai, can you first explain how you found out about the size of our Miu-chan’s clothes? Probably because she felt the waves of anger I was emitting, Miu-chan said with a wry smile:

”These are probably the same size as the clothes that I borrowed during Hina’s Parents Day, the last time, right? Thank you. Well…… Which one should I choose?”

Ah, so Miu-chan told senpai that time! But don’t think I will let it go so easily, what’s with the matter of you having so many clothes of that size! This person is dangerous!

”If Miu-sama is willing to try more of the clothes, my hard preparations will all pay off.”

”…… Miu-chan, just burn the clothes that you wore if you don’t want them, or at least return back after washing them. Remember not to give it back to senpai directly.”

”Okay~”

”W- Wait a minute! Segawa-kun, please cut me some slack!”

Leaving Sako-senpai calling fairy, angel and the like at a side, Miu-chan walked quickly away to change.

After that, a legendary prelude started.

”Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to start the photography session of the cosplay café presented by the Road Observation Research Society. Models, please enter!”

After Nimura's introductions, cheers gradually rang, while the atmosphere in the classroom got lively in an instant.

"Fuu…… My plan is flawless, look at this scene, this is our victory!"

If we disregard the club president who was being happy alone over there, the scene before my eyes is truly touching to me.

Though Sora-chan was rather shy, she still started to pose on the stage.

Nee-san was doing the same thing as well, huh. Being bathed in the non-stop flashing lights, they looked rather happy. Miu-chan presented her perfect smile, Hina posed as a mascot, showering us with her lethal cuteness, while Raika-san who posed as a huge-breasted bunny girl stood with them as well.

The matter that was worth a mention was that Raika-san emitted an enchanting presence while being intoxicated with the cosplay of the three sisters. I should say that, senpai was so enchanting that she was like a whole different person.

Her usually expressionless facial muscles seemed to have relaxed about four centimeters, and even I could see the flush on senpai's face.

The photography session started.

Starting from goodness knows when, people similar to Sako-senpai gathered around.

"Sorry, please look at the camera here!"

"Eh!? L- Like this?"

Click, click!

"Please look over here next!"

"Oh, okay!"

Click, click!

"O- Onii-chan! W- What should I do now!"

"Just do your best."

"Noo~"

Even if I want to stop them, there were just too many people. It turned into a photography session where people squeezed into a crowd.

Nimura turned into a target as well. Well…… Just let them photograph him.

”Miu-sama! So pretty! So innocent! So natural! So excelleeeeeeeeeent—!”

…… Why is Sako-senpai at the photography area as well?

”Me too, I want to join tooooooooooooo!”

Eh! Hiromi-chan!? Wearing what seemed to be red and white clothes for a singing competition, Hiromi-chan dashed into the photography session, causing the people to cry out loud.

It seemed like the photography session was rather successful, but was somehow treated by the others as an impromptu performance.

As the word spread, the situation the following day was even more hectic, and that was how we got through the feverish two day festival.

Roary should be hosting a café, but it turned into a photography session somehow. We even became the top voted most popular event during the school festival. However, since the event differed from what we applied for at first, we were disqualified. This seemed to make Sako-senpai quite regretful as well. That’s no wonder, as we should have been one of the top stalls because of the taste of our cakes…...

Just like that. Though it couldn’t be said everything ran without a hitch, the first school festival of my college life and the first cosplay in Sora-chan’s life ended just like that.

”…… Did you have fun?”

I tried to ask as Sora-chan was preparing to go to change.

After a short pause to arrange her thoughts…… Sora-chan smiled.

”…… Mnn, I’ll have to thank Yuri-san for this some other time.”

Sora-chan’s words caused my heart to heat up, as those words meant that she believes that Nee-san would still have a chance to reunite with us.

”We’re home.”

”Home~”

Being exceptionally happy, Sora-chan and Hina, who was more energetic than usual, were still rather excited when they arrived home.

That was quite reasonable.

When I think about it, in the few months that we lived together, it doesn't seem like we had ever went out to have fun before.

To be frank, the school festival was actually quite exhausting, but I'm still happy that Sora-chan and the others took part.

"Phew~ Hina is tired~"

Hina sat on the sofa and hammered her shoulders while saying.

I really wonder where she learned all this from.

"Onii-chan, are you hungry? How about I go make something for you to eat?"

"Ah, I'm really somewhat hungry. But aren't you tired as well, Sora-chan? Let's just get delivery today, or eat outside……"

"No, we'll have to be thriftier. Besides, there are still a lot left in the fridge."

"Very well, since you say so."

"Okay, then I'll go change first."

After she said that, Sora-chan started to get up from the sofa.

"Eh…… Huh?"

Sora-chan's body wavered slightly, and she sat back again.

"Sora-chan?"

"Eh? I can't use any force…… And my body feels like it's floating……"

Sora-chan blinked in surprise.

"Onee-chan, you didn't come up with a bout of flu or fever, did you?"

"Fever?"

"Sora Nee-tan has a fever? Hot?"

"How is that possible? I was still fine just now……"

As Sora-chan was about to stop me, I placed my hand on her forehead. It did feel somewhat hot.

”Here's the thermometer. Onee-chan, let’s have a look.”

Miu-chan immediately took out the thermometer from the first aid kit, handing it to Sora-chan.

”Seriously, you all are just unreasonable.”

Sora-chan popped the thermometer into her mouth reluctantly.

”How is it, Sora-chan.”

”Yef, yef, I’m fofaffy fine.”

”Onee-chan, don’t talk when we’re taking your temperature.”

In between Sora-chan and Miu-chan, I could only feel flustered.

After awhile, the thermometer beeped.

”Nee-chan, look. You really have a fever.”

”Even if it’s a fever, it’s only a slight fever.”

When I had a look, I saw that the thermometer showed 37.5°C. Though I was relieved as it wasn’t a high fever, a fever is still a fever.

”Onee-chan gets fevers easily whenever she plays too much.”

”You’re saying that like I’m still a kid……”

”You’re probably somewhat tired because you were always busy. It’s better if you hurry up and get to bed.”

”Nee-tan is tired? If you don’t sweep, Hina will be angwy.”

”It’s really no big deal, and the dinner……”

Seeing that even Hina started to urge her to rest, Sora-chan threw a tantrum.

”We’ll order delivery for dinner, so just lie down!”

”Onii-chan is just too forceful.”

Though she kept complaining, Sora-chan still got up slowly, being more cautious than before.

”A- Are you okay? Do you need me to carry you to your room?”

”It’s not even a serious illness!”

”Ah, though you could use the chance to let Oji-san hug you~”

”Miu!”

Sora-chan’s face seemed to have reddened. It wouldn’t be because of the fever, would it?

However, Sora-chan quickly walked back to her room as though she was escaping from us, who were following her in worry, and then……

”I will take a good rest, so don’t worry so much!”

After saying that, Sora-chan slammed the door forcefully.

”Is Sora Nee-tan okay?”

”Her fever will probably go down after she sleeps for awhile, Hina.”

I carried Hina to the living room.

”However, it’s better to take leave for her tomorrow……”

Though the school festival was quite happy, I actually didn’t notice that Sora-chan worked so hard to the extent of getting a fever.

My originally happy emotions receded like the tide, and what took its place was regret.

I should have taken care of them more carefully. The thought of the days that I made Sora-chan work so hard because of my credits resurfaced in my mind.

In the end, I’m still not qualified to be their guardian huh……

With my shoulders slumped, I lied down on the sofa.

1. ↑ Short ribs, usually served without bone in Japan, unless it is specified as hone-tsuki-karubi

Chapter 6 - The One and Only

Curling up in her warm bed, it was a long time ago since Sora stayed in her bed like this now.

After checking her alarm clock that took a break today, Sora found that it was already past eight.

The time when everyone successively arrives at school.

I made everyone worry for me, huh…… And I already took a lot of leaves before this.

Even so, since her Onii-chan wants her to stay in bed, she would continue to lie down for some time.

Speaking of which, it was hard for her to leave her bed even after she wakes up in the past.

It's just that she is often awake before the alarm clock even rings recently.

Her life had undergone a large change.

Though many things happened to her, it felt like the matters happened at a world faraway.

Only the rays of the morning sun that shone through the curtains were as piercing as before…...

The girl whose age was merely fourteen turned around. *It feels like I still have a slight fever, and my throat hurts.*

In the past, her father would always buy things that she likes whenever she catches a cold, and she would always be rather happy though he often buys her the wrong ones.

Now, her Onii-chan is probably waiting for her to wake up as well, it's unmistakable…… While the menu for breakfast would probably be instant porridge bought from outside.

Thinking of that, Sora cheered up slightly.

She once tried to make porridge as well, but she burnt it…… A wry smile surfaced on her face when Sora recalled the incident.

Onii-chan is busy as well, so I feel bad for this, but it can't be helped.

If Yuri-san is here, she would probably take care to make a tasty meal for patients.

Sora imagined for a moment, and realized that even so, the thought of not wanting to trouble others still existed in her mind, feeling somewhat mystified because of that.

To her, Yuri-san is like a good elder sister, a person that she admires. And because of that, Sora is very clear of the difference between them.

…… Perhaps it's because my fever hasn't gone down yet…… Though there wasn't any problem before this. Sora thought. *Miu, Hina and I..... Are different, because I'm the elder sister.*

Sora pulled her blanket again and closed her eyes.

At the same time, she thought in her heart, wishing that she would return to her original state when she wakes up.

As expected, worried voices rang in Sora's class.

"What! Takanashi took leave!?"

"Daiki, please keep quiet."

He already looked embarrassing when he toppled his chair backwards when he rose, and he actually cried out in a volume audible to the whole class. Facing a good friend like this, Shuuji could only smile wryly.

— Oh well, it's not hard to imagine anyway.

"Why did she take leave all of a sudden? Wasn't she just fine last week?"

No matter how he asked, it's impossible for Shuuji to know the answer.

However, the reasonable answer above is not suitable to be used on the hot-blooded boy.

Especially when it concerns Takanashi Sora.

"Is she sick? Or hurt?"

"I just heard of it coincidentally when I passed by the staffroom. I only know that she has a fever."

"Then why didn't you ask clearly!"

Daiki paced the room in anxiety.

"It's that hentai……!"

He was gradually losing control.

"The hentai that you spoke of…… Does that refer to Takanashi-san's uncle? Stop messing around. Don't do anything that lacks consideration again."

In truth, only Shuuji knows of the incident when Daiki made trouble at the Takanashi residence, which he did not let his senpais in the Choir Club know of, because it would only cause Daiki to get scolded no matter how he thought of things.

It's a good thing that the opposing party did not inform the school of the incident, but judging it with common sense, Daiki's actions were just too abnormal. The only thing that could be confirmed was that his actions were basically done out of kindness and love, and thus, Shuuji who has a good relationship with Daiki as they grew up together, could only advise Daiki not to repeat the same thing.

"That's right! It's because of that guy! It's all that guy's fault!"

But in Daiki's mind, it seems like there was a large transformation about the matter.

The term hentai is now exclusively used on the college student acting as the Takanashi's guardian.

In addition, a dramatic scene such as Sora is actually very fragile, but was forced to work for the hentai when she wishes to go to school appeared.

Of course, Shuuji's opinions were completely different.

Takanashi Sora has a gentle personality, and wouldn't actively build a good relationship with the others, including the matters of her quitting her club. It was probably because of a change in her life, causing her to be busier than before.

Plus, she is visibly more active when she is at home, while her relationship with the college student seemed to be quite good in Shuuji's eyes. Besides, that person seemed to be a good-natured person as well, so the people who would truly trouble Takanashi would probably be people who don't care about other people's opinions like Daiki.

However, speaking of all these would probably make Daiki lose control more seriously, so Shuuji could only choose to be silent. Actually, Shuuji is regarded as a good looking teenager who is good at sensing how people feel, being quite popular among the students.

"Just forget about it, she will probably recover very soon……"

"How would you know about that!? Maybe that guy took advantage of Takanashi's gentle personality, forcing her to do unreasonable things…… Like cleaning the house, washing the clothes, cleaning the house and so on!"

Seeing Daiki's appearance of wanting to rush over and grab someone's collar, the smile on Shuuji's face was unchanged, but he secretly took half a step back.

Uh oh, he isn't listening anymore. If I knew this would happen, I wouldn't have told him just now about Takanashi-san taking leave. Though Shuuji regretted his actions in his heart, things cannot be turned back anymore.

"I've listened till now. You, are you an idiot?"

"W- What!?"

Daiki was almost in the state of a derailing train, when a cold voice said that to him all of a sudden.

The person who spoke was Hanamura Youko, who was raising her novel slightly.

"Firstly, didn't he already explain that Takanashi-san took leave because she has a fever? If so, the reason for her taking leave is because of her fever. Plus, Takanashi-san's uncle doesn't seem to be such a bad person. And also, when you said cleaning the house, washing the clothes, cleaning the house just now, you said cleaning the house twice. That would annoy the people listening, so please take note. Apart from that, cleaning the house and washing clothes are not unreasonable matters at all, so shouldn't she just do so if she must? I don't know if you don't know or don't want to do things like that, but if you judge everything from your perspective, it would only create trouble for the others. And the last, and most important thing is— You- Are- Noi- sy."

After finishing all that in one go, Youko's gaze fell on her book once more.

Getting scolded without being able to do a thing, Daiki's mouth repeatedly opened and closed again, unable to say anything.

"Ah…… Err……."

"Give up already, Daiki. It's impossible to win an argument with girls."

This is a truth. Having the age of a second year middle school student, Shuuji was already very clear about the iron rule in this world.

"Isn't she our classmate! We should have been worried of her from the first place……"

Just as Daiki was thinking about what to say, the bell signifying the time for the morning assembly that did not change for a long time, rang from the speaker above the blackboard.

"It's time for the morning assembly. By the way, you're the one on duty today."

"Uuu……!"

At the same moment, the front door of the class was opened.

”Ah! Seriously……. RISE——!”

The loud voice that was among the top of the Choir Club rang in the classroom.

I first knocked the door and only opened it after there was a response.

”Sora-chan, are you okay?”

”Much better. I just have a slight fever, so you don’t need to be so worried.”

Though that was what Sora-chan said, she still covered half of her face with her blanket, but her cracked voice probably isn’t because of the blanket.

Besides, her fever hasn’t gone down in the morning as well.

”Are you thirsty? I got you some Pocari, but I can still get it for you if you’d like tea more.”

”…… It’s okay, Pocari is fine.”

”Okay.”

Would it be easier for her to drink it from the bottle, or should I pour it into a cup…….?

As I was hesitating, Sora-chan poked her head out of the blanket.

Her face was still red.

”Sorry for troubling you from yesterday.”

Do I really have the right to be their guardian like this? I feel more and more ashamed of myself now.

”I bought some flu medicine at a supermarket, but…… don’t you need to go to the hospital?”

”I’m telling you that I’m fine. I feel much more comfortable after waking up, and it’s just that my throat is a bit sore right now. That’s not important. Onii-chan, don’t you need to go to your college? You probably need to clear up the things that you used during the school festival, right?”

”You don’t need to worry about that, I’ve contacted them already.”

”But……”

As soon as I mentioned Sora-chan’s condition, they immediately agreed to my absence.

I used up a lot of effort to convince Raika-san who wished to visit and take care of Sora-chan not to come.

Nimura promised to help me during roll call as well, making me feel the care of my club mates.

Speaking of which, Sako-senpai told me that he has something to tell me the next time I go to school, but he didn't tell me what. However, senpai might just want to give some of Miu-chan's photos to me.

Even Sora-chan who seemed to be in pain when she rose from the bed looked somewhat satisfied when she drank a mouthful of the cold Pocari.

"Have Miu and Hina gone to school now?"

"Mnn, I asked Miu-chan to send Hina to the kindergarten today."

"…… The kindergarten is a bit far from the primary school. It's so hard on her."

Seeing a sad expression on the eldest daughter with a strong sense of responsibility, I couldn't help but smile wryly.

"Actually, I wanted to send Hina today, but as usual, Miu-chan said *'Oji-san, please stay home and take care of Onee-chan!'*, and also: *'Leaving a sick girl at home alone, you are really lacking in delicacy!'*

Seeing me imitate Miu-chan made Sora-chan smile.

"Haha…… That's so alike."

"Hina gave me some trouble this morning as well, saying: *'Hina wants to take care of Nee-tan as well!'*, and convincing her gave me quite a headache. So, I'll be very troubled if you don't get well soon."

"Seriously……. I've said this many times now…… I'm fine."

"Okay, okay. Then if you feel like eating, there's porridge. Want some? Though they're just instant food, I bought three flavors."

As soon as I finished speaking, I heard laughter coming from the blankets.

"Mnn? What's so funny?"

"…… Nothing. Thank you, Onii-chan, I'll eat it later."

"It's nothing, really. Go to sleep."

After hesitating for a moment…… I helped to cover Sora-chan with her blanket.

The air that drifted from the blanket had the sweet fragrance of milk.

”…… Actually, you don’t need to be so worried. I’m fine, really.”

Sora-chan repeated her words with her face red, and buried herself in her blankets again.

Perhaps Sora-chan is too embarrassed to let me see her sleepy face?

But to me…… I wish to keep staring at her sleeping expression.

Not noticing that I caused Sora-chan to be so exhausted that she fell sick really made me feel regret and shame. Even now, Sora-chan could not depend on me……

Is it true that I really don’t have the right to be their guardian?

In that moment, I recalled the time when the boy called Maeshima grabbed me.

Is it really because I am not a competent guardian that Sora-chan couldn’t return to the Choir Club? If so…… What should I do?

While Yuuta was thinking of all that, Miu and Hina were walking on the road to the kindergarten.

”…… Is Nee-tan okay?”

”She’s fine. Hina, don’t you get stomachaches once in a while, and feel all weak when you have a fever? Onee-chan just has a fever, and is feeling a bit tired because of that. She’ll be fine after she sleeps for awhile.”

”Uuu—“

Holding the moaning Hina, Miu quickly walked towards the kindergarten.

To be honest, Miu was worried for Sora as well, but she knew that it would only make Hina more worried, more uneasy if she shows her worry.

And that was why Miu deliberately brought Hina out as though nothing happened.

— Besides, Oji-san is there as well.

At times like these, Yuuta’s presence is very important. If Yuuta was absent, Miu would probably choose to accompany Sora at home even if she has to skip school.

Though it might be hard for her stubborn sister to calm down when Yuuta is by her side, Miu wishes for her sister to take the opportunity and be honest when she is sick.

”…… Even so, Onee-chan probably still wouldn’t give in.”

Don’t force yourself and just act sweetly in front of Oji-san.

If the two of them were the only ones at home, Onee-chan might be slightly more honest with her emotions.

While thinking about that, Miu walked towards the kindergarten.

On the road that Miu and Hina passed by not long ago, a silhouette appeared.

It was the courageous high school girl who continually observed the Takanashi residence.

”Sora-chan is sick? And that man is taking care of her…… No, no, no! Letting a beast like that be alone with Sora-chan is just too dangerous!”

Though that was what she said, there would be a test on her first period at school. By the way, if she skips the class, she would have to go for supplementary lessons after school for quite some time.

”…… Ahhh! Why must I have the test today!?”

Kitahara Shiori grabbed her hair in frustration and went to school unwillingly.

When my parents were still here, I didn’t have such an experience, while during the time when I lived together with Nee-san, she doesn’t seem to fall sick. Even when we encountered such a situation, Nee-san would still make a lot of preparations beforehand while I was still flustered, so I only needed to follow her instructions.

”……. Well….. Aren’t I somewhat of a useless person?”

No, it’s useless even if I despair now, since I must take on the task of caring for the sick when Sora-chan is sleeping. Speaking of which, what should I do now?

”Err…… I’ve contacted the school…… If there’s anything else to do…..”

I tried to recall the conditions when I fell sick outside, but……

”Nee-san would come over to take care of me every time.”

Of course, Nee-san wouldn't always be by my side, but she would still help to buy stuff and bring me some dishes that she cooked beforehand.

And after I entered college, I had Nimura, who knows how to take care of other people more than any other girlfriends, by my side.

"I'm really of no use at all!"

However, this isn't the time for me to say things like this.

"Okay!"

In any case, I'll start from gathering things that might be used.

"Towels for wiping off the sweat…… Though I prepared some yesterday, a little bit more might be needed…… Mnn, that should be enough. And also…… Do I need to change the cooling gel sheets?"

Actually, I don't really like those sheets. If one really needs to be cooled down, I think that wet towels are actually more comfortable.

"That thing might be useful if one is alone, but I'm here today."

Okay, I'll prepare wet towels then.

"Actually, we've touched the matter of appetite just now. Though we can just get instant porridge…… Vitamins are still important. At times like this…… Apples! We still need apples!"

To a patient, apples and canned peaches should be necessary. Regretfully, there aren't any canned peaches in the house, so the only choice left would be apples.

Speaking of which, should I make the apples into puree? Or would making it into a bunny be better?

"A bunny would probably be for Hina."

Just like that, I wandered in the living room for some time, and unknowingly gathered so many things that I couldn't hold them with my hands. Since I can't move them in one go, then let's divide them into two or three……

"Onii-chan, what are you doing? …… Ugh! What's with those things!"

With a look of surprise on her face, Sora-chan knitted her brows after seeing the scene before her.

"Carrying so many towels, perhaps you spilled something…… Or maybe not?"

”Mnn, I didn’t spill anything…… Err, wait, shouldn’t you be lying down!”

”Well…… I’m hungry.”

”Eh?”

”I said I’m hungry!”

Answering in a shy tone, a red flush was on Sora-chan’s face as well.

It’s hard to tell if that was because of shyness or her fever.

But compared with yesterday night, she seemed to be much better.

”Though the fever was a bit serious yesterday, it’s starting to cool down right now. Onii-chan, it’s fine even if you don’t stay at home to take care of me. I’ll go to bed after I finish eating, so you really ought to go back to college. I’m fine, really.”

”I can’t possibly do that.”

”…… Then, I’m cooking something to eat. Do you want some as well, Onii-chan?”

Being told something like that, I really can't stand it at all.

”S- Stop that, just let me handle a small matter like this!”

Though it’s just instant porridge.

Just like that, I spent the morning taking care of Sora-chan.

After eating porridge and taking the medicine, I felt much better.

Though I’m forcing myself to be a little more energetic, it doesn’t matter.

To be honest, I really don’t have much of an appetite, and though Onii-chan made apple puree for me, I hid the fact that I nearly couldn’t finish it since the apples weren’t really sweet. After all, Onii-chan’s kind intentions…… make me happy enough.

”I’ll just have to wait for my throat to get well now……”

After saying so in a low voice, I touched my throat that was aching slightly. Is it because I haven’t sung for quite some time, causing my throat to deteriorate? It seems like my throat had never been so painful.

Even though I'm working so hard, Onii-chan is still looking at me in worry.

"Let's check your body temperature again."

"Don't worry, it definitely cooled down by now."

Because of Onii-chan's suggestion, I held the thermometer in my mouth once again.

37.8°C, slightly higher than before. I definitely can't let Onii-chan see this.

"How is it?"

"Mnn, I'm fine, it already dropped to a normal temperature."

When I spoke, I hurriedly switched off the electronic thermometer at the same time.

I don't want Onii-chan to be more worried.

"I'll handle everything after this, so you can just go to school in the afternoon."

"Don't you need to lie down and rest more!?"

With a look of worry on his face, Onii-chan held a large amount of towels in his hands.

Just looking at it made me feel warm.

After that, Onii-chan and I stayed in the living room.

We watched the afternoon TV programs while chatting.

When I said that I didn't think the school festival would be so interesting, a complicated expression appeared on Onii-chan's face.

"If only I took more notice of you, it wouldn't turn out like this."

Onii-chan said that with his shoulders slumped.

I told him that it wasn't his fault, but he just shook his head.

I must get well faster.

If I get well, Onii-chan wouldn't show an expression like that.

"I think…… I'd better sleep a bit more."

But actually I wanted to stay by his side even more……

Suppressing my discomfort, I returned to my room.

My body felt hot from just now.

Did my body temperature rise again?

So that Onii-chan wouldn't notice, I must get well quickly.

"You don't need to take care of me now! If you come into my room without permission, I'll break off all ties with you!"

"Eh!?"

"I don't want a man to stay in my room when I'm sleeping!"

I told Onii-chan with a grumpy face. Seeing Onii-chan's forlorn appearance was actually quite interesting.

I'll have to cure my illness without Onii-chan having any knowledge about it.

That's because I'm a capable elder sister in this family.

After school, singing that was tidily divided to four parts resounded in the music room.

However, now that they were doing practice on singing in harmony, a boy ignored all of the others, sternly glaring at thin air. And he didn't make any noise at all.

"La la—"

"……"

"la la la—"

"……"

"la la la la la laaaaaa———!"

"……"

It was Maeshima Daiki. With his mouth tightly closed, he was buried in his own world.

Though Daiki stood together with his companions in his club, he did not take part at all.

Though the other members felt awkward about that, Daiki did not even notice the fact.

”Oi! What the heck are you doing!”

”Guwagh!”

All of a sudden, Daiki wailed because of the vigorous pressure on his skull.

”Ouch, ouch, ouch!”

”I wanted you to feel pain! You useless thing!”

With a grip far exceeding the powers of a normal middle school girl, Okae Kiyomi tightly held Daiki’s head. The severe pain that was akin to the incantation used by Xuanzang to control Sun Wukong caused Daiki to be tortured for quite some time before he was released.

”W- What were you doing! Objection to violence!”

”This is not violence, but punishment! What’s with you, not singing when you’re here in the Choir Club!”

”That was not punishment, either! Besides, I don’t have the mood to sing leisurely here when Takanashi might be in pain!”

”…… What did you say? What did you mean by Takanashi-san might be in pain?”

That instant, an ominous light flashed in Kiyomi’s eyes. At the same time, a voice rang by Daiki as though he was stopping Kiyomi.

”Yes, Buchou. Let me add in, Takanashi-san had a fever from yesterday night. Though it’s just a slight fever, she took leave for a day just to be safe as her fever did not go down even until this morning. That seems to be how things are. I only confirmed this with the teachers because of Daiki’s persistence.”

”So she had a cold?”

”B- But, it might just worsen!”

”I’ve said just now that it’s just a slight fever.”

”Yeah, you really don’t need to make such a huge fuss.”

Youko spoke right after Shuuji finished.

Since things turned into a two-on-one, or even three-on-one, Daiki’s tone turned agitated.

”I’m not as optimistic as you guys! And also…… I- In the first place…… Isn’t worrying for her as a classmate and a friend in the same club normal!”

”Takanashi-san hasn’t returned to the Choir Club, has she?”

”S- She’ll return sooner or later!”

”That’s right, I don’t plan to let my cute Takanashi-san get away from my important harem.”

”Well, I’ll go immediately then……”

”But that’s completely unrelated to the matter if we are going to visit her.”

”EH!”

Not thinking that he would be stopped by Kiyomi, Daiki widened his eyes in shock.

Daiki even thought that the Kiyomi before him would be the most possible person to agree to his suggestion of visiting Sora.

”Having a boy who isn’t too close to her visit her on the day she takes leave, isn’t that a bit lacking in common sense?”

”I- Isn’t too close to her…… Hanamura.”

”Isn’t that the truth?”

Being attacked with a follow-up attack made Daiki suffer even more.

”S- So what! Isn’t it fine as long as we’re classmates!”

”But we would still need to wait until she takes leave for three days or so. Plus, the person who goes for a visit will not be Maeshima, but I, as the club president. After all, seeing such a horrible thing would just cause her illness to worsen.”

”B- Buchou!?”

”That’s right, it would be much better than letting the insensitive Maeshima-kun meet her when she’s sick.”

That was a very reasonable opinion, and Youko’s words caused Shuuji to nod silently as well.

”Err, but……”

”I agree to Buchou and Hanamura-san’s opinions as well. I think that would be better.”

Daiki really could not comprehend the reason that he cannot go, and would do anything to check on Sora’s condition immediately, but his opinions were mercilessly rebuked.

”I’m telling you……!”

”Well then, let us continue on our practice. I don’t wish to waste time as well.”

”Yeah. With the problem of the idiot being troubled solved, let us continue to practice!”

The three nodded in turn.

”…… Y- You guys!”

Being trampled like weeds, completely excluded from the situation, Daiki could only shout with his face and neck red in agitation.

After the club meeting that did not allow him to return early ended, Daiki walked back home on the road alone.

”Those guys aren’t clear of the situation at all.”

Daiki walked while complaining.

Speaking of which, Daiki wouldn’t be so impatient if Sora took leave for just a day in the past. However, things are different now.

The unreliable looking guy actually proclaims himself to be a guardian, living together with them as well.

”It’s definitely because he overworked Takanashi that she fell sick.”

While he worried, an unpleasant emotion surged in his heart at the same time.

When Daiki ran to the Takanashi residence before this, he saw Sora with an expression that he had never once seen before.

The Sora that time was like a completely different person compared with the person Daiki sees at school. Sora would directly complain, vent her anger, and have the slightest trace of a smile on her face when she was with the man that is said to be her uncle.

”…… What the heck!”

Daiki did not dislike the gentle Sora, and it could be said that it was because of that, it made him feel more protective of her. On the other hand, the cheery Sora looks very cute as well. That was what Daiki thought. Furthermore, the smile that Sora gave when she covered the guy with the blanket……

”Takanashi’s smile…… So cute……”

But when he recalled that the smile was not directed at him, but that annoying man, it filled Daiki with annoyance.

Daiki decided to vent his strong unwillingness on the electric pole beside him.

And of course, the one that would be hurt was Daiki’s leg. The feeling was quite similar to his troubles of love that can’t be expressed to anyone.

”Stupid hentai!”

Just thinking that Sora might be suffering because of illness alone at the hentai’s house made Daiki uncomfortable.

”Though Buchou and Hanamura said that it’s lacking in common sense like this……”

Just taking a look at the situation is probably okay.

”That’s right, yeah!”

Daiki turned around and walked towards the opposite direction. It was because his emotions are too direct that he does not have the remaining energy to think for the others. Just like that, Daiki ran towards Sora’s home without further thought.

The house felt unnaturally silent.

As the house was located at a residential district some distance from the hubbub in Ikebukuro, it was usually like that.

However, wails or laughter could always be heard in our house, so we usually don’t feel the silence.

After having lunch, Sora-chan returned to her bedroom to sleep.

Though I wished to change new wet towels or cooling gel sheets for her, going into her room and seeing Sora-chan sleeping without permission will definitely cause me to face a crisis of cutting off all ties with her. Though it filled me with uneasiness, I still didn’t have the courage to barge in by force.

So that I could hear immediately when Sora-chan speaks, I walked to the second floor.

After that, I walked into Nee-san’s room that's no longer a ‘room that can’t be opened’.

In the space where Nee-san's presence could still be felt, a large amount of clothes were still scattered on the floor and had not yet being cleaned up. I pushed the clothes aside slightly, making some space.

Books completely unfamiliar to me filled the bookshelves, and I lost the courage to flip through them after I thought that I might be berated by Sora-chan.

"…… Ahh."

I found a large photo album between the cabinet and the bookshelf.

That time when the photo appeared was as though Nee-san were at hand by my side.

I took the photo album and flipped it open.

…… I became speechless in shock.

Nee-san, what on earth are you……?

Among the large amounts of fancy photos comparable to artists, there were also cuttings of Nee-san on magazines, most probably done by Nii-san. Isn't he a bit too obsessed with Nee-san?

However, I saw Nee-san's smiling face, and her happy appearance when she was with her friends as well.

I really…… couldn't suppress the smile on my face.

My sister, who lost her parents at an age even younger than me right now, raised me single-handedly.

Even when she married, she chose a man with kids. To be honest, I actually thought for an instant that Nee-san doesn't really love him, but just married a rich man who can afford my school fees.

As for how much happiness Nee-san actually had, this matter made me feel uneasy in my heart.

"Haha…… As expected of you, Nee-san."

A person like Nee-san really doesn't need me to worry for her.

However, I think my own happiness right now is not inferior to yours, Nee-san.

That's why, Nee-san, please help Sora-chan get well soon.

In the photo album, I found a group photo of Hina, Miu-chan, Sora-chan and Nee-san when they were much younger. Probably because he had to take the photo, Nii-san wasn't in it.

I took out the photo from the photo album, slitting it inside the notebook that I usually bring along.

Feeling that Nee-san is much closer to me than before made my spirits rise.

The area around my eyes is really hot.

That was the thought that first surfaced when Sora awoke.

”Haa- haa……”

Sora opened her blurry eyes. She slowly looked at her surroundings and found that she was in her own room.

”Ah, that’s right, I came back to my room to sleep.”

As my body temperature seemed to have rose, I went back to my room so that Onii-chan wouldn’t notice.

But at the same time that she lied down on her bed, her originally suppressed discomfort lost control immediately. Though she fell asleep at once, her fever did not have any sign of fading after she woke up.

What a headache. And my body is sticky because of sweat as well.

”Uuu……”

My head is spinning. The ceiling swirled slowly like a whirlpool.

”But…… I have to…… Change my clothes.”

I slowly got off my bed, grabbing the change of clothes prepared beforehand.

As I didn’t want Onii-chan to notice that my pajamas were drenched in sweat, I frantically pushed my weak body.

”…… If my cold worsens, it would cause more trouble for Onii-chan…… Seriously, I’m an idiot.”

But while I was sleeping, I seemed to have heard Onii-chan’s voice. While humming something, Onii-chan was doing something in the kitchen, making me laugh. I definitely can’t let Onii-chan know about this, and his humming was somewhat out of tune as well.

”Uuu, it’s such a huge failure this time. Though it’s the first time I did cosplay during the school festival, it turned out like this in the end. When I recover from my illness, I should cook a good meal for them in return……”

One day, I will make an impressive dish, giving Onii-chan a large surprise. One day, it will definitely be possible.

”One day…… I will definitely succeed……”

As I was muttering to myself while taking off my pajamas, I noticed once again that the ceiling seemed to be swirling.

I picked up the towel used to lower the temperature of my forehead, dabbed it in the washbasin, and immediately felt much better after wiping away the sweat on my body. Though my body was actually hot, a chill came over my back.

…… I just feel…… so cold……

My throat seemed to have turned swollen, even breathing was painful.

While suppressing the feeling of my painful breathing, I lied down on my bed once more. As soon as I closed my eyes, my consciousness faded immediately.

After she went back to her room, Sora-chan didn’t come out.

It was almost time for Miu-chan and Hina to return.

I think I’ll ask Miu-chan to take a look into Sora-chan’s room after she returns.

But since I handed the job of fetching and sending Hina to Miu-chan, it made me worry about her condition as well.

Miu-chan and Hina probably worked too hard as well.

If they collapsed because of sickness after catching Sora-chan’s cold, what should I do then……? If Hina is sick, the kindergarten would probably inform me, but Miu-chan might just force herself to go on, hiding things from me.

I should have asked Miu-chan to return immediately while I fetch Hina.

The worry in my heart could not be suppressed the instant when regret welled up. I tried to call Miu-chan’s phone, but I couldn’t get through the line.

That intensified my uneasiness. If Sora-chan is suffering because of her worsening fever as well……

Miu-chan, Sora-chan and Hina.

If all of them are together, I might not be so worried……

Right now, the thing that I am wishing for most is for Sora-chan to recover quickly, seeing the smiles of the three sisters together.

I stood in the corridor where both Sora-chan's room and the entrance were visible to me and paced anxiously.

Right at that moment, footsteps came from the entrance.

"Miu-chan! Hina!"

I couldn't help but run towards the entrance, opening the door immediately.

"Eh!"

"…… Huh?"

The person who stood at the entrance was neither Miu-chan nor Hina.

"I recall that you are Sora-chan's classmate, Maeshima-kun, right?"

The boy who specially ran to my house, had said that I'm the reason that Sora-chan couldn't go back to the Choir Club.

"So sorry, is there anything wrong?"

The reason that my tone was somewhat stiff wasn't because I'm holding a grudge for the matter before this, mind you.

Yes, I'm not vengeful at all. Of course not! Hahahahaha!

"Because Takanashi took leave, so…… Erm, I'm here to visit her as a representative of the Choir Club."

Visiting her? So students in middle school nowadays would visit the others if they take leave for just a day?

In my time, taking leave for a day or two might just make people suspect that you're skipping school.

”T- Thank you, but Sora-chan is sleeping right now. Can you come again another time?”

I explained to him in a steady way.

”I want to see her.”

The unyielding boy before me wore a strangely stern expression on his face.

But if you’re speaking of stern expressions, my look right now probably isn’t inferior to his.

”I told you just now. Sora-chan is sleeping right now. Can you please go back?”

”…… Does that mean you’re not letting other people see her?”

”No, I will tell her that you visited.”

”…… That wouldn’t be enough.”

The short haired boy glared at me with what seemed to be a furious gaze.

”Is her illness so serious that you can’t let people visit her? If so, isn’t that more worrisome? I heard that it’s just a slight fever.”

Why is this boy so agitated when he’s speaking to me?

”I’m telling you that she’s sleeping. I can’t just let anyone see a girl’s sleeping face, can I?”

My reasonable explanation seemed to have misled him into a completely mistaken direction instead.

”Y- You saw Takanashi’s sleeping face before this?!”

…… If you really want me to say it, we even slept together in the same room once.

Though Sora-chan wasn’t even willing to let me take care of her in her room today…… I really didn’t wish to talk about that.

Added with the fact that this child scolded me for the Choir Club before this all of a sudden, caused me to have ill feelings for him, and more or less, my tone turned sour as well.

”Well of course, we’re living together after all. I’ve seen her sleeping appearance loads of times.”

Though it only lasted until two months ago!

”U- Unforgivable! Dratted hentai!”

As expected, I seemed to have rubbed him the wrong way.

”You indeed took unforgivable actions on Takanashi, taking advantage of her introverted nature of not knowing how to refuse other people! Stop pestering her!”

His perplexing syllogism made me speechless, but that wasn’t the end of it.

”Since her parents passed away, it was really hard on Takanashi! She always looks tired, and even her grades weakened! She was originally bad at talking with other people, but she actively took part in the activities of the Choir Club! Many people joined the Choir Club just for a chance to talk to her! But she left! Takanashi is so popular that half of the boys in class like her, but she doesn’t know about it at all! Give us back our Takanashi who is beautiful, cute, gentle, listens to the others though she isn’t good at talking, and would smile shyly once in a while!”

Tears glistened in the eyes of the boy who said all that in one go.

Is that true? My view of the boy before me changed completely.

This child likes Sora-chan very much, but he doesn’t know what to do.

But he actually cares for Sora-chan so much.

Relief and guilt welled up in my heart.

Indeed, I cannot provide Sora-chan with a life that is the same as the past.

In the past, Sora-chan didn’t even need to worry about cooking.

She probably didn’t need to take care of her sisters so painstakingly as well.

And matters about money, taking out the trash in the morning, there are so many problems when they are added together.

To Sora-chan, who didn’t complain even once for going to school from Hachiouji, what were her feelings when she left her club? Did I really understand this matter?

To any other middle school students, they don’t need to shoulder a burden like Sora-chan’s at all. Even if their parents pass away, as long as they have a good, reliable guardian……

Since I didn’t say anything, the boy continued as though he was in pursuit:

”You were the one who gave Takanashi so much trouble! Give Takanashi back to us!”

The voice pierced through me.

Is that true? That shouldn’t be right.

However, even if my mouth tore, I could not say that I took perfect care of her, as I was talking about my cute niece who fell sick because of my incompetence.

Unable to say anything in my defense, it felt like I was the most shameful person in the world.

Sora opened her eyes in the biting frost. Is it so cold at these times? While thinking about that question, the assailing coldness caused her body to tremble repeatedly.

—Ugh…… Why do I feel so cold……?

Feeling uneasy about the situation, Sora tightly covered her body with her blanket, but it could not eliminate the chill completely. Though she covered herself so much.

Perhaps my body temperature is falling as my fever is fading?

While suffering because of the chill and her uneasiness, Sora curled up her body.

She felt like her ears were starting to ring, as though someone were talking from far away.

'……!'

"Ehh……?"

It was not her ear ringing. There were really people talking.

Sora tried to recall the familiar voice with her fuzzy mind. In the end, she only spoke a sentence.

"…… Onii-chan, it's so noisy……"

Among the two voices that Sora heard, one of them was indeed Yuuta's voice.

Though Sora was suffering, she felt relieved the instant she heard Yuuta's voice.

Her Onii-chan is still at her side although he can't be seen. Thinking that Onii-chan is at a distance where he will approach if she speaks made her feel quite reassured.

Even though Sora is embarrassed of speaking something like *'I want Onii-chan to stay by my side'*, she still wishes to listen to Onii-chan's voice. Thus, Sora tried to listen to the conversation while thinking of that.

That moment, the voice came into Sora's ears.

Maeshima Daiki's accusations intensified.

"I knew it all along! You're no uncle at all! You're just an outsider whose sister married Takanashi's dad!!"

He is absolutely correct, however……

"Then you came here after the parents of the Takanashis died! You're trying to take advantage of the fact that there are only kids here, winning over the Takanashis who couldn't refuse you, and then claiming the house for yourself, aren't you! Isn't it because of you forcing Takanashi to do chores like cleaning the house and the like, that causes her to fall sick in exhaustion!"

"How would I possibly think of something like that! Indeed, I did let Sora-chan cook and so on, but that's because……"

"See! You're indeed using Takanashi! You jerk!"

Using…… I did not think such a thing, and that's absolutely true.

We are a family who share the same fate, promising to live together.

But the words that this rude boy— Maeshima said, are assessments by the others on me as well.

Perhaps I might seem to be like that in other people's eyes, as I can't be counted as an adult yet. I am also anticipating my birthday, but will things change even if I'm over twenty?

"Wait a minute. Listen to me, calm down until I finish……"

My words. As I was about to say so, a voice came from behind me.

"…… Why is Maeshima-kun over here?"

With her whole face red, Sora-chan stood on the stairs, looking at us in surprise. Her footsteps looked somewhat unsteady. Is she having a fever again?

"Hey! You still can't get up right now!"

Sora-chan ignored me as I hurriedly ran to her side, and stared directly at Maeshima-kun at the entrance.

"What did you say just now? Maeshima-kun?"

The boy hesitantly shifted his gaze, and then…… He spoke as though he made a strong resolution:

”Takanashi! It’s fine now! You don’t need to care about that guy who made you sick in exhaustion, and just say it directly if you feel dissatisfied!”

”What do you mean by dissatisfaction? Besides, what did you say about an outsider……”

Probably because of her fever, Sora-chan’s appearance when she supported herself on the railing made me worry a lot.

To ease the atmosphere, I tried to interject.

”That doesn’t matter right now. Your cold will worsen if you don’t lie down on your bed, Sora-chan.”

”I cannot lie down now…… Because he spoke of Onii-chan like that just now……!”

Sora-chan walked down the stairs weakly.

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”I won’t permit you to speak badly of Onii-chan, Maeshima-kun.”

Sora-chan said while gazing in Maeshima-kun’s eyes, making him visibly troubled.

He probably never saw Sora-chan like this before.

Sora-chan can only relax when she is with her family, on the other hand she is extremely introverted outside. But to my knowledge, she is a responsible, tough person who is rather reliable among the three sisters.

”B- But…… This guy is just an unrelated outsider……”

”…… That’s not true!!”

Sora-chan dashed down the stairs while interrupting and ran by my side.

”When the three of us were almost torn apart to be adopted separately, only he was willing to let us live together, and even move to the place he is living! At that moment when we did not know what to do, only Onii-chan was willing to say that among our relatives!”

Sora-chan, who was always gentle in front of her classmates, was then glaring at Maeshima. Her eyes were red with tears.

”Onii-chan sheltered us in his cramped apartment meant for one person…… That was the reason we could stay together. As we couldn’t return to this house that time, that was why Onii-chan brought us to his place! He treats us as his family! Because of that, he was even reproached by Oba-san, and kept suffering…… but even then, Onii-chan didn’t gave up on us!”

Sora-chan’s mouth that always seemed rather cute was then showing her displeasure.

Having reddened cheeks and bright eyes gleaming with tears, the angry Sora-chan was both mysterious and beautiful.

”It was all thanks to Onii-chan that we…… We could return to this house, living a life of four together like this. Though Miu and I are indeed unrelated to Onii-chan by blood, even so…… He is not an outsider! I know that he kept doing odd jobs no matter how much he suffered! I know that he kept working hard just for us! Today, he stayed at home without going to school just to take care of me, just for me! Why must such a great Onii-chan be scolded by you like this! Onii-chan is one of my beloved family members! That’s why…… That’s why…… If you say such a thing like that again, I definitely won’t forgive you!!”

”Ta- Takanashi……”

Facing such an agitated Sora-chan for the first time, Maeshima-kun couldn’t help but take half a step back.

”Maeshima-kun…… I definitely, definitely won’t forgive you!”

Sora-chan shouted with tears in her eyes.

I’m very happy, I’m really very happy. Having Sora-chan say that I’m her family made me really happy, but……

”Takanashi…… I- I don’t mean that…… I……”

Maeshima-kun fell into a daze in shock. Sora-chan, he’s actually worried about you as well, though his way of doing it isn’t too good. I think that I can more or less understand how he feels. Since he’s a boy after all, he wishes to protect the things that he treasures most. But compared with that, compared with anything else, the most important thing right now is Sora-chan’s health……!

”Huff! Huff……!”

Sora-chan’s breathing was extremely ragged.

”Sora-chan, please calm down for a moment, you’ve just recovered from your illness.”

”It’s okay, I…… Ahh!”

Before even finishing her words, she became unsteady. She suddenly collapsed as her legs went limp!

”Sora-chan!!”

”…… Huff! Huff…… Ahh.”

I hurriedly dashed forward to catch her at the moment before she fell on the floor.

”…… Eh?”

Wait a minute, what’s with this!

”Sora-chan! Why are you so hot!”

I placed my hand on her forehead, and realized that she was overwhelmingly hot. How can this be? When did this start?

”Onii, chan……”

Sora-chan called me weakly in my lap. Her burning body didn’t even have the energy to support herself, and she could only lie down weakly on me.

”Sora-chan! Oi! Sora-chan……!”

As though she was answering me, she gave me a faint smile while looking in my eyes, closing her eyes right after that.

”So- Sora————!”

I carried Sora-chan’s light body, and dashed towards the streets that had already descended into darkness after bumping the boy away.

That moment, I didn’t have time to consider anything else.

Kitahara Shiori opened her front door, secretly observing what occurred outside.

Because what seemed to be a middle school boy entered the house where a beast dwells.

Being curious, Shiori took a look from the seams of the door and immediately heard sounds of argument.

”…… That guy really can’t be trusted!”

At the moment when Shiori said those words……

The door of the Takanashi residence opened suddenly.

”Ahh—!”

The scene before her made her cry out loud.

”Sora-chan, I’ll bring you to the doctor’s right away!”

She saw the man shouting something while dashing outside with the girl in his hands.

Perhaps…… The beast finally extended his evil claws towards the girl?

”A- A thing like this, I definitely won’t let you go free!”

I understood my helplessness once more.

”Hospital! Where’s the closest hospital here!”

Though I was asking myself about that, I never once checked out the location of the nearby hospitals at all.

Ahhh! Blast! How can I be so stupid!

When Sora-chan first fell sick, shouldn't I have checked out about these matters first? It's because of *that* that I can't be a competent guardian for the three sisters.

However, this isn't a time for me to repent. Even though I'm so shameful, Sora-chan who was in my lap still chose to depend on a person like me. I must save Sora-chan! I must save her no matter what!

"Hospital…… Doctor! Where are they!"

Although I dashed out of the house, should I turn right after this? Or is it left!?

Since this place is at the center of the city, bringing her to a hospital nearby would definitely be faster than calling the ambulance.

Just when I was biting my lip, looking around me……

"This ends here! You beast!"

"Ah?"

A girl suddenly appeared before me. It was the neighbor who lives opposite to us.

"Let go of that child———! Beast—!"

"Just as well, hurry up and tell me! Where's the nearest hospital!?"

The both of us spoke at the same time, and our voices overlapped.

"……Eh?"

"I said, the hospital!"

I didn't hear clearly what the girl said just now, but I didn't have the mood to care about that right now.

"N- No, what I'm saying is, you extended your evil claws to the child…… Errr, eh?"

"Say it some time after this, just tell me where the hospital is right now! Sora-chan is having a serious fever! Please! Hurry up and tell me!!"

Holding Sora-chan in my lap, I questioned the high school girl that I saw only a few times.

”Err…… W- Well…… As I was saying…… Errr. That’s why…… Isn’t that right?”

”I’m asking you where the hospital is! Right? Left? Which way should I go!?”

”No, what are you planning to do with her……”

”Didn’t I already say that I’m bringing Sora-chan to the hospital! Please, hurry up and tell me where the hospital is!”

Bearing Sora-chan’s weight made my shoeless feet suffer on the asphalt road.

But I did not have the time to care about that, as I was just worried about Sora-chan.

”Huff! Huff……”

The pained breathing from Sora-chan tightly tugged at my heart.

Please, hurry up and tell me where the hospital is!

The girl whose eyes were widened in shock before me finally spoke after looking at my and Sora-chan’s expressions in turn.

”I- If you’re looking for the hospital, go straight from this road, turn right when you reach the entrance of the hotel, and then…… Look to your left…… A- Anyways, just look to the alley on your left, and you can see the signboard!”

”Go straight and turn right at the hotel! Then look for the signboard of a hospital in an alley on the left, right?”

”Mnn, that’s right!”

”Thank you!”

I immediately dashed forward without looking back.

Go straight, turn right, go left.

I ran with the speed that definitely broke the fastest record in my life.

Sora-chan’s body was light as a feather.

It was with a body like this that she supported me until now?

I never thought that Sora-chan would cause me so much discomfort just by falling sick.

I ran with my life.

Just at that moment, I heard a weak moan.

”Mo…… ther……”

That was the first time I heard the word from Sora-chan.

My first time.

Just now, she called for her mother.

That’s quite reasonable! She’s just fourteen!

I tried to suppress my tears that almost trickled down my face.

Just imagining about Sora-chan’s emotions……. Imagining the emotions that she kept suppressing, my whole heart tightened.

How long did she suppress it?

I tightly hugged her light, slender body.

”Sora-chan…… I- I will definitely protect you!”

I can only help Sora-chan do one thing for Nee-san and Nii-san.

That is— never release my hands.

While being immersed in a fluffy feeling, Sora had a dream.

A dream that she had from the time she was little.

I had arrived in this world, but when I was little my biological mother passed away.

My new mother got along with me quite well, and then Miu was born. We were very happy, but……

My second mother left without saying anything one day, never to return ever again.

After that, I met Yuri-san.

Her age was closer to me than my father, and was a beautiful person, easy to get along with.

It might be because of *that* that I did not call her ‘Mother’.

On the day when we met for the first time, Yuri-san told me:

”Call me mother in the future.”

However, I never did do that.

After that, I never had the chance to call her that as well.

Even though she treasured me so much.

And I couldn’t even thank her for the cosplay costume.

To compensate for all this, I hope that I can become someone like Yuri-san.

So that everyone would not cry anymore.

After all, I am a person who is already used to not having a mother.

That’s why it’s fine for me, I can go on.

Isn’t that right? Mother…… Mo……ther.

The touch of the arms hugging me gently.

The heartbeat, panting and smell that she likes the most.

All of it gave her a strange sense of comfort, a mystifying sense of happiness.

Because she knows that someone is protecting her.

Her mother who looks after her from heaven, and her Onii-chan who is somewhat unreliable, but still very considerate.

The high school girl might be a defender of justice who always cared for us.

That was probably the first time in my whole life that I was thankful for such a simple news. When I saw the signboard of Ikebukuro Kumagaya Hospital appear before my eyes, I dashed over with a speed that broke my fastest record yet again, rushing into the building.

”I’m sorry— She- She’s having a serious fever!”

I arrived at a place that seemed to be a district hospital, dashed towards the counter and said that to a female that looked like a nurse.

”Err, wait a minute, and you are……?”

”She’s burning up! She collapsed yesterday as well, and although she was somewhat energetic during noon, it turned out like this now……! Please, please save her! I will do anything if you will save her!”

”Are you her brother? Please calm down. Can you first fill in the form and show your medical card?”

”Dawdling like this, what if anything happens to Sora-chan—! Hurry up and call the doctor! Please!”

”Err, no, please listen to me……!”

”Can’t you just hurry up! She already lost consciousness!”

”Ugh, why did I meet such an unreasonable person!”

”It’s useless even if you feel that I am unreasonable, and that’s my line, seriously! You’re just like the father of the Takanashi family…… Err, eh? Isn’t that child Sora, daughter of Takanashi-san?”

”Eh?”

”Oi, oi, what’s with the ruckus in the waiting room?”

An old man clad in a white robe walked out from the door behind the counter.

”Are you a doctor! You probably are, aren’t you!”

In such a situation, if he’s only a geezer who likes to cosplay in white robes, I will definitely go mad!

”Please take a look at Sora-chan! She just fainted! It might be a very serious illness!”

”In any case, please calm down, mister. I really wish to say that you’ll have to go through the necessary procedures first, as this is a hospital after all, however…… Since I looked after Sora-chan from the time she was little, so I’ll make an exception for this once.”

After saying that, a smile appeared on the old doctor’s face, and slowly extended his hands towards Sora-chan in my hands. The doctor made Sora-chan open her mouth, and looked at into her throat.

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”Let’s see, ahh~”

What do you think you’re doing to our child! Old geezer!!

”The tonsils are swollen, so it’s probably that.”

”W- What is that!”

”—— It’s just a normal flu.”

”Eh?”

My jaw dropped in shock.

”B- But she suddenly got weak and collapsed, and she’s burning up as well!”

”She has fever because her tonsils are swollen, of course she will feel weak when she’s having a fever. And when you said suddenly, it probably isn’t a drastic change that happened a minute or two before this, is it? Was it because she forced herself to do something, and had a slight anemia? Do you have any impression of this?”

”…… Errr, ahh.”

Actually, Sora-chan did say that she was tired, and went back to sleep…… Perhaps her temperature got up from that time!?

And she got down all of a sudden, and was so agitated as well……

”Sora-chan, look at me. Can you tell me your condition right now?”

”…… Uuu……. Uuu.”

Sora-chan made a noise.

”Sora-chan! Are you okay!?”

”…… Mnn, I’m fine.”

Though her breathing was somewhat ragged, Sora-chan still answered clearly.

”In any case, I’ll do a proper diagnosis on Sora-chan first. Can you help carry Sora-chan to the doctor’s room?”

”Okay!”

I tightly held Sora-chan and followed the old, white-haired doctor.

The time that the doors of the hospital were roughly pushed open was after over ten minutes.

”Is Onee-chan okay?”

”Huff…… Huff…… Primary students right now, run really quickly…… Uwaa!”

The ones who forcefully pushed the doors open and dashed inside were Miu-chan and the mysterious high school girl before this.

”Nee-tan! Oi-tan!”

And also Hina.

”…… Why is the runt so heavy! Since you’re a runt, shouldn’t you be lighter! And also, shouldn’t you wait for me a bit! I’m not familiar with this area after all!”

Apart from that, the sweaty Maeshima-kun who carried Hina here on his back was present as well.

”Come here, Hina.”

”Oi-tan~!”

Using Maeshima-kun’s back as a springboard, Hina pounced at me. Okay, I caught you. And also, a mid air hug like this has a large impact, so don’t do that next time.

”Cough! Cough! Don’t step on my back! Runt!”

Actually calling our cute Hina a runt, this guy really is impolite.

”Oji-san, seriously. We saw that the front door was wide open as soon as we returned, while Onee-chan’s classmate was standing there in a daze, and Shiori-san was standing in front of our house, flustered, as well. You should be calmer when you go out next time.”

With her hands on her hip, Miu-chan berated me. Having her say that to me made me remember that I did forget to lock the front door, and I seemed to have left Maeshima-kun over there as well. And also, did I just hear the name of the high school girl for the first time?

”Shiori-san who lived opposite to us told us that you’re bringing Onee-chan to the hospital, so that’s why Hina and I came over here…… How is Onee-chan right now?”

After her scolding, Miu-chan asked with worry.

”Sorry for causing things to turn out like this…… It seems like Sora-chan is okay.”

While holding Hina, I apologized to Miu-chan with my head lowered.

From various aspects, I already let them down.

After all, I was the one who caused them to overwork, and also…… Even if I was stopped by Sora-chan, I should have confirmed her condition in her room before this.

”Then how is Onee-chan’s fever……? She doesn’t need to stay in the hospital, does she?”

”She’s not in such a serious condition. I gave her an injection to lower her temperature, so she can go back with you after a short rest. Take two or three days of medicine and she will be as fit as a fiddle.”

Having finished his diagnosis, the doctor came to our side and explained to us. That person seemed to have started this hospital a long time ago, and was Sora-chan, Miu-chan, and Hina’s family doctor as well.

”Is that so….. That’s great.”

”Gweat~”

Miu-chan and Hina held each other’s hands happily.

On the way from the house to here, they were probably quite worried.

Once I thought of the bond between the sisters, I soon understood the gravity of the situation as a guardian.

”Sora-chan is already awake, so you can go in and see her now.”

After hearing the doctor say that leisurely, we walked towards the ward.

”E- Erm……”

Having a look of hesitance and naivety on his face, Maeshima-kun halted me.

After that, he lowered his head while facing me as though he made a strong resolution.

”E- Erm…… Very sorry for just now, and for the time before this as well.”

It seems like his misunderstanding on me lessened slightly.

”C- Can I…… This time, can I…… visit her as well?”

His wording became steadier as well.

That's not really strange. Being berated by Sora-chan like that, he probably can't go to sleep this night if I let him go back like this.

Sora-chan as well, though she did it for my sake, she really did say too much……

It can't be helped, I'll spare him today then!

I nodded to Maeshima-kun, and he brightened immediately.

…… What an innocent child. Well…… Being upright to this extent, it's hard for me to bear a grudge on him.

However, it's just for today.

Starting from tomorrow, all the guys that have evil thoughts cannot get near to our Sora-chan!

Sora-chan rested in the small lounge by the doctor's room. Probably because she heard our voices in the waiting room, she was not surprised even though so many people appeared before her.

"Errr…… Sorry for giving everyone so much trouble. It seems like my cold worsened because I did not rest properly."

"That's why~ Seriously. Though you might be very happy while being alone with Oji-san, you still have to be more careful, Onee-chan."

"W- Wait a minute! Miu!"

"Indeed, it's because I wasn't careful enough as well. Sorry, Sora-chan."

"…… That's not it, this isn't, Onii-chan's fault……"

Sora-chan's cheeks reddened slightly, and she lowered her head.

At that moment, Maeshima-kun walked before Sora-chan.

"Takanashi…… Erm, I……"

"Just now…… Erm…… I'm sorry for shouting at you so loudly."

After seeing Maeshima-kun, Sora-chan's head lowered even more.

"S- Something like that…… Doesn't matter. I- I was….. at fault as well."

"Erm….. Mnn, since you know it…… It's fine then."

Sora-chan smiled somewhat shyly.

”You’re here to visit me, right…… Thank you, Maeshima-kun.”

He brightened just because Sora-chan called his name.

…… Wait a minute, Sora-chan, aren’t you treating him a bit too kindly?

After that, the mysterious high school girl who was looking at us spoke:

”Erm…… I have a question, who is this person?”

”Ehh……? Shiori-san, you don’t know?”

Both Sora-chan and Miu-chan looked rather surprised.

For me, realizing that everyone knows this girl made me more surprised instead.

”Erm…… He’s my relative…… A person equal to my uncle……”

Sora-chan shortly explained the situation to the girl.

”I- Is that so…… I- I even thought……”

Seeing Shiori-san’s embarrassed look made Miu-chan even more mystified.

”…… What did you think?”

”Ah, Ahaha…… N- Nothing much. B- B- But it was really hard on you three!”

Shiori-san, who seemed to have known Miu-chan for a long time now, gently stroked her head.

”…… Sora-chan, speaking of which, if you are suffering or feel tired, you can’t force yourself like this, just tell me honestly. You can keep secrets from me in many aspects, but…… If you keep even a thing like this a secret, I will be very troubled.”

”…… Mnn, I’m sorry.”

Sora-chan said with her whole face red and head lowered.

I think that we can all have things that we can and can’t say.

But if that causes us to misunderstand each other, it will definitely not be good.

No matter how many secrets we keep that shocks the others, we will definitely not be separated…… I think, that is how family should be.

”Secwet? Nee-tan has a secwet! Hina wants to know!”

Hearing our conversation, Hina said that while catching hold of Sora-chan.

”…… The thing is, Onee-chan likes Hina and Miu the most.”

After hearing Sora-chan say that, Hina started to laugh happily.

”That’s not a secwet. Hina knows that! Hina likes Sora Nee-tan and Miu Nee-tan, and likes Oi-tan the most as well!”

Hina clasped Sora-chan and my necks and pulled us together.

”Ah~ That’s so sly~”

After saying that, Miu-chan hugged Hina as well.

This feeling…… Makes me feel so happy.

However, I forgot that two defenders of justice were looking at the happy scene at a side.

” “So he really is a hentai!?” “

The two exchanged gazes and reached a consensus.

The doubt that gradually faded in their hearts blazed once more……

They decided to form an alliance to protect Sora and the others from the hentai’s evil claws, but that would be a story for another time after they left the ward.

After the touching scene of the family reaffirming their love for each other ended, the doctor approached and said:

”That’s right, it seems like the matter has ended now. Can you allow me to say something?”

”Ah, is there anything wrong, doctor?”

”Mister, it seems like you were in somewhat of a hurry just now.”

Eh?

”Isn’t it about time for you to take a look at your feet?”

After the doctor said that with a smile on his face, I hurriedly shifted my gaze to my feet. What I saw were my own shoeless feet.

”…… Gah!”

My feet were absolutely filthy, being wholly stained black.

That’s right, as I hurriedly ran out of the house that time…… I forgot to wear any shoes.

Of course, since asphalt had been spread on each road, they weren’t dirty to the extent of being muddy, but basically, running on the road in only socks still wouldn’t do.

If so, the legs would be extremely filthy, just like my feet are right now. Furthermore, the aftereffects of wearing pitch black socks indoors are shown on the corridors before me.

”Sora-chan’s brother, here, take this.”

The nurse handed me something with a smile, which I reflexively took. It was……

”So I’ll count on you to mop the floor clean then~”

”Oji-san, you should have at least wore shoes. And also, you have to bring the medical card when you go to the hospital.”

After saying that, Miu-chan took out a medical card from her pocket.

I really embarrassed myself completely.

”Oi-tan’s socks are dirty!”

Yes, you’re right. My apologies.

Just like that, before I brought Sora-chan and the others home……

As a punishment for dirtying the hospital that should be clean, I worked hard to clean up the corridors with a mop.

Epilogue

After a few days of not going to school, the school felt like a completely different place.

The reason that I feel that it's different, is probably because of a change in myself as well.

Thinking of that, courage slightly welled up inside her heart.

"…… Okay."

After encouraging herself in a low voice, Sora opened the door to the music room.

"Takanashi-san!"

As soon as she saw Sora's silhouette, Kiyomi cried out in surprise.

Kiyomi quickly ran towards Sora.

"H- How are you!? Are you fine already?"

"Yes, thanks to everyone, I've recovered from my illness."

"Is that so…… That's great. I was so worried about you."

Kiyomi said with relief.

"Didn't someone just plan that she'll drag Takanashi-san back to the club in the name of visiting her if she takes leave for another day? Saying something like it's easier to make her sign when she's having a fever."

"Shut up, Tani!"

Shuuji did not care about Kiyomi's appearance of wanting to pounce on him at any moment, and continued:

"During the time that Takanashi-san wasn't here, Daiki was quite restless."

"Sh- Shuuji!"

Hearing Shuuji's words, Daiki who was aside hurriedly flailed his arms in protest, and the more surprising thing was, Sora actually walked to Daiki herself. Her expression seemed to be somewhat different from the past.

"Maeshima-kun, thank you."

"Ehh…… Why……"

”Because you kept worrying for me.”

”N- Not really, I wasn’t really worried or anything.”

Daiki turned his face away in slight embarrassment.

”If you are willing to return to the Choir Club, I……”

Daiki suddenly fell into a daze. The one that came into his view was Sora, who was bathed in gentle sunlight, wearing a smile on her face. It was a very natural smile that was even gentler than the sunlight.

For some reason, the Sora today is different from the past, the shy atmosphere surrounding her completely disappeared.

However, the Sora right now is far more natural than before…… And compared with the past…… Far more beautiful.

Daiki suddenly forgot what he was about to say, blankly staring at the smile before him.

Can anyone fall in love with the same person for the second time?

But that moment, Maeshima Daiki did indeed fall in love.

”Even so, thank you…… Thanks to you, I’ve decided now.”

Sora turned around, saying to everyone in the music room:

”Please allow me to join the Choir Club once more.”

Today, I decided to dine outside with everyone to celebrate Sora-chan’s recovery.

The reason that I decided to do that was because I think that the time when a family gathers and heads to a place is very important.

That’s why, after we waited for everyone to return home, we went to a nearby family restaurant to have dinner.

”Ah, so you returned to the Choir Club. I’ll try to return home earlier then.”

”Everyone told me ‘Welcome back’, it made me so happy.”

Sora-chan said with mixed feelings.

”That’s great, Onee-chan.”

”Nee-tan is gweat!”

Sora-chan looked somewhat embarrassed.

”Even so, it’s all thanks to Shiori-san being willing to help out as well.”

”Hina like Shiori-san as well!”

That’s right. For some reason, Shiori-san furiously came to our house, agreeing to fetch Hina when we can’t do it, and was willing to take care of Hina until someone returns as well.

Though we adamantly refused as we didn’t want to trouble them, we still accepted her kindness in the end as her parents strongly agreed to it, as well as visiting us to give advice.

We found out along the way that the parents living opposite to our house felt lonely after their children grew up, and Shiori-san’s mother who was a kindergarten teacher as well, likes to play with children and seemed to have a good relationship with Nee-san as well.

”Really…… Because of everyone’s help, we finally found a solution.”

My heart was filled with gratitude.

”However, that troubled someone as well.”

Sora-chan said that with a wry smile. I shifted my gaze towards her, hoping for her to continue.

However, she just smiled meaningfully while saying:

”…… That’s a secret. I will lock up Yuri-san’s room again, and let the secret stay a secret……I’m counting on you.”

Since Sora-chan said that, then that’s that. After all, girls are always full of secrets.

Sora’s secret is actually like this.

”Ehhhhhh!? Why do you have this!”

”My brother got this from his kouhai. He’s somewhat useful sometimes.”

Hanamura Youko said while waving the photo in her hands.

The photo was of the first cosplay that Sora did.

”W- Wait a minute! A- At least don’t take it to school……”

”Why? It looks great. You can definitely become a top cosplayer at a national level.”

”I’m not interested in that……”

Just resolving to battle her introversion and returning to the Choir Club gave Sora a headache.

On the other hand, Youko smiled deviously as though she saw through all of that.

”Then let’s make a deal, Takanashi…… No, Sora-san. How about you join my club as well?”

”Eh? Your club?”

”I joined both the Literary Club and the Choir Club. I won’t ask you to show up at the Literary Club every day, just recess time would be enough.”

”T- That’s not a problem, but…… Why a person like me……”

”Hoho, the Literary Club wants beauties as well…… That was a joke. It's because you seem to be one of us.”

After saying that, Youko took out the continuation of a manga on Sora’s bookshelf.

”Let us build a good relationship. I will teach you much more after this.”

It seems like a person who can teach Sora about cosplay and manga in place of Yuri appeared just like that.

We returned home after dining at the family restaurant, and when I opened the door happily—

”Welcome home, Yuuta-san.”

That person appeared before my eyes.

”Uuuu…….”

I couldn’t help but moan. Sigh…… It was the last person that I want to meet.

And also, a visible frown was on Oba-san’s face, whose usual appearance was already stern. It made me feel like escaping to a deserted island in the south.

”It seems like there is a reason for the house being empty.”

Oba-san said after glancing at Sora-chan behind me.

”I agree that it was a very hassling situation, but…… How can you explain the house being as messy as this!”

Oba-san’s finger was pointed at the messy living room because of the various objects scattered there and about. During the few days that Sora-chan fell sick, the house was indeed quite messy, even though being busy taking care of Sora-chan is one of the reasons, it was also retribution for causing Sora-chan to overwork.

”Oba-san, please let me explain, this is actually…… Err……”

“Stop that nonsense and clean up immediately!”

My excuse was shot down like paper before Oba-san’s scoldings.

”Sigh…… What was I thinking……”

While mopping the floor, I couldn’t help but sigh.

”It had been awhile since we were so happy when we went for dinner together……”

”Onii-chan, it’ll be bad if Oba-san hears that.”

”It’s okay, nothing would happen.”

Besides, Oba-san should be checking on Miu-chan’s performance in the bathroom as well.

Thinking that Miu-chan had to wash the bathtub while being stared at by Oba-san from the back made me pity her.

”That’s right. I have something to tell you, Onii-chan.”

”Mnn? What is it?”

I said leisurely, while frantically washing the stains that I could see on the floor.

”Thank you, Onii-chan. And also—“

”Eh? What did you say just now……”

The words that I did not hear clearly caused me to turn around and ask.

And the smile that I saw that moment would probably be the most beautiful smile I have ever seen in my whole life.

”No, nothing. Hurry up and let's finish. If we loaf off, we’ll get scolded again.”

Seeing the sweet smile that Sora-chan gave me like never before, my heart couldn’t help but race. So that Sora-chan wouldn’t notice it, I could only try to bury myself in the cleaning. It seems like I have another secret as well.

”Onii-chan is an idiot.”

After saying that, Sora kept her most important secret that hasn’t been noticed yet in her heart, locking it up. That’s right, Yuuta, Sora is actually—

Afterword

Recently, I cried every week because of ‘One Piece’, I really don’t know what to do.

Though the afterword is written at the very end, right now, Whitebeard is giving his last order as a captain. This is a plot that causes manly tears to flow, that is how a man should be.

By the way, the fact that I wrote the afterword after reading this copy can’t be known by the editorial department.

Speaking plainly, this means that it’s a few weeks since I passed the deadline.

If this book is read by a reader who wishes to be a light novelist of Super Dash Bunko, I’ll have to say this. This is actually a very bad situation, because the precise deadline that the editorial department gave is two months before the book is sold.

Which means, I should have handed in my drafts on last December.

Of course, it’s my fault for things to turn out like this, however…… It’s just too difficult!

After handing in the seventh volume of ‘Mayoi Neko’ on November, I had to write ‘Papakiki’ for December!

After the first volume ends, I had to take about a month to write this story, then writing the eighth volume of ‘Mayoi Neko’ on March!?

Encountering such a raging development like the pirate king rushing to the headquarters of the Marines, you can’t really blame me for this…… Is such an explanation satisfactory? And I had to write the script for a new manga as well……

In any case, exceeding the deadline is not a good thing. Editors, I’m sorry.

So sorry for letting everyone see me giving so many excuses, I am Matsu Tomohiro.

So do you like the second volume? I worked quite hard this time. Though I’m always writing novels in my full schedule, this is probably the one that I worked on the hardest up till now.

In the story department, the love in the second volume has increased, and develops mainly Sora, but including the new characters, all of them are starting to advance as well. For the following developments, even I, as the writer, am looking forward to it as well.

And also, Nakajima Yuka-sensei’s illustrations this time are excellent; the three sisters are just too cute.

As the writing for the draft was too slow, I sat on a chair for quite a long time, so my weight reached a dangerous high in my record. Perhaps it’s about time for me to go on a diet.

Speaking of which, even if I want to go on a diet, limiting my food because of the lack of time for working out might drag on my writing speed even more. Picking between my deadline and my weight…… Ugh, it feels so regretful.

However, good things happened when I am writing the draft as well. Yabuki Kentarou-sensei's manga version of 'Mayoi Neko Overrun!' started to get serialized in Jump SQ. Because of the reproduction that satisfied even Peco-sensei and also Yabuki-sensei's awesome manga drawing skills, it can be said to be a work that must be seen, so please take a look at it.

Lastly, this book can only be published because of many people's efforts, so I'll use the opportunity to thank everyone over here. To the most important person, you who are willing to read this book, I wish to express my deepest thanks as well.

I think I will alternate between 'Papa no Iu Koto wo Kikinasai!' and 'Mayoi Neko Overrun!' for some time, so if everyone likes both of them, it will be an unparalleled happiness for me.

Matsu Tomohiro

Not for Sale or Rent

表紙撮影スタッフ
おつかれさまでしたー
ふーっ
カバ
お姉ちゃん お疲れっ!!
ぱっ!
まさか!?
あっ
ぺたーん
パサッ
パサッ

Afterword

Hello, I am Nakajima Yuka, in charge of the illustrations.

Designing the clothing of the girls,

I'm actually extremely delightful,

I really don't know what to do.

The fashion magazines for teenagers~ college students

are getting more and more……

As for the men……

Nimura wears more sedate clothes,

Yuuta wears more casual clothing.

Eh? Sako-senpai? Err~ Ahh~…. Mnn.

I'll try to let him wear clothes that would make him look like the king of otakus (laughs)

That's all, thank you, readers who read until this end!

2012.2 Nakajima Yuka

Not for Sale or Rent

Translator's Notes and References

Chapter 2 - Sora-chan and the Choir Club

1. A school centered on preparing students to get into university.
2. Japanese schoolgirl uniforms are based on the sailor's uniform.

Chapter 3 - The Three Sisters' Endeavors

1. Note that he ends his sentences with わ(wa), which is usually used by females
2. A person who acts tough at home while acting timid outside. The meaning is same as the idiom a *lion at home, a mouse abroad*

Chapter 5 - School Festival and The First Time

1. Short ribs, usually served without bone in Japan, unless it is specified as hone-tsuki-karubi

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定価 本体571円＋税

飛行機事故で行方不明となった姉夫婦が残した
三人の娘を引き取った大学一年生、瀬川祐太。
池袋の一軒家に移り住んで始まった新生活だが、思春期まっただ中の空、
小学生にして小悪魔な美羽、まだ両親の事故を理解していない保育園児のひなの
三姉妹との暮らしは波乱でいっぱい!
単位不足と学園祭、それに空の中学での人間模様も加わり
新米パパの運命と恋の行方はいかに!?
愛と感動満載で贈るドタバタアットホームラブコメ、第二幕!!

著者紹介

松 智洋 PRESENTED BY Tomohiro Matsu

福岡出身の文筆業者です。
職業を『書く書く』詐欺師に変更しないと
いけないかも知れません。
いやー、書きたいとは思ってるんですよ。ホントに。

なかじまゆか ILLUSTRATED BY Yuka Nakajima

最近ウォーキング大会で20kmほど歩きました
死ぬかと思いました(笑)

生息観察はこちら(おとなむけ)
http://www.digitallover.net/

スーパーダッシュ文庫 松　智洋の本

- 迷い猫オーバーラン！ 拾ってなんていってないんだからね!!
- 迷い猫オーバーラン！ 2 拾わせてあげてもいいわよ!?
- 迷い猫オーバーラン！ 3 ……拾う?
- 迷い猫オーバーラン！ 4 みんな私が拾います♪
- 迷い猫オーバーラン！ 5 本気で拾うと仰いますの?
- 迷い猫オーバーラン！ 6 拾った後はどうするの?
- 迷い猫オーバーラン！ 7 拾ったらいいじゃないですか!
- パパのいうことを聞きなさい！
- パパのいうことを聞きなさい！ 2